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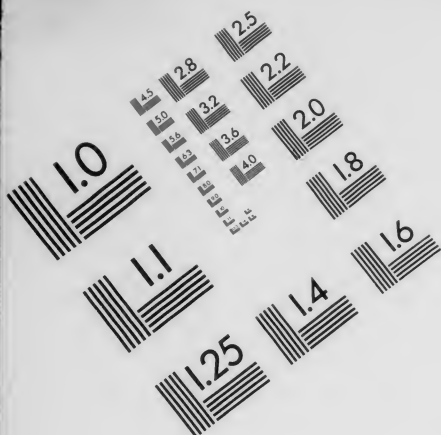
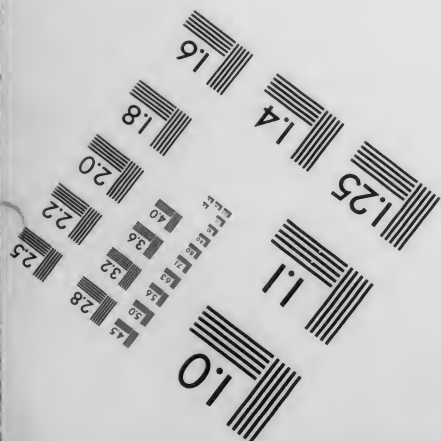
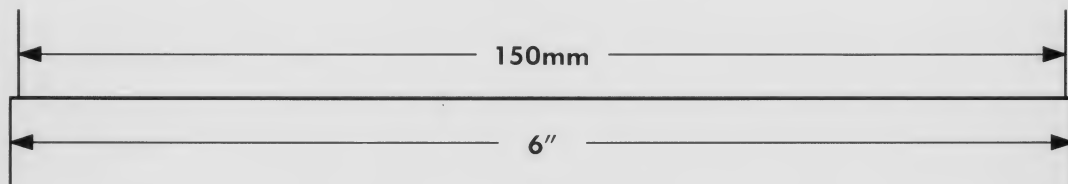
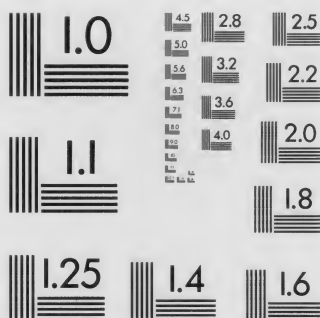
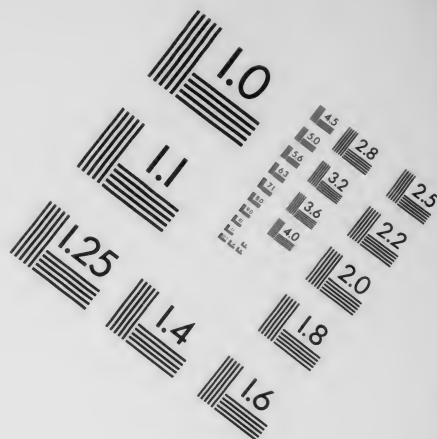
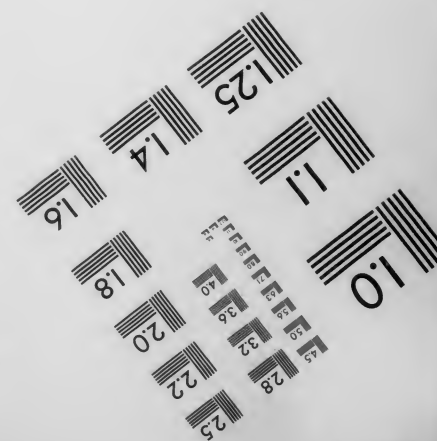


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THE
BIBLE AND EVOLUTION.

BY
ARTHUR B. MOSS.

With Preface by H. J. HARDWICKE, M.D., F.R.C.S.



LONDON:
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PREFACE.

WITH great pleasure I respond to the request made to me by the author of "The Bible and Evolution" to add a few lines as a preface to his work, the sentiments expressed in which so much accord with my own views; but I regret that pressure of professional and other engagements will prevent my writing at any length.

It has often struck me with surprise that so many intelligent and educated people still cling to the old myths and superstitions of the past, when reason and common sense so clearly proclaim them to be utterly unworthy of acceptance. It seems almost incredible that, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, a large proportion of the people of Europe still profess to believe the fables of the Creation, Fall, and Redemption, notwithstanding the fact that science and reason both declare them to have been impossible as historic occurrences. Moreover, the fables relating to the Fall and Redemption are, according to all recognised standards of morality, repulsive in the extreme, and opposed to all civilised ideas of justice, decency, and propriety. The original deity of this superstition, whose name, consisting of the four Hebrew consonants, יהוה, is variously pronounced—Jehovah and Javeh by English Christians, Yahwah by German

scholars, Yahouh and Yahue by Orientals, and Yahouhah, with a guttural middle syllable, by the Jews—is a very monster of cruelty and duplicity, as shown by the older portions of the Bible; while the god-man of the New Testament is described as a being sadly deficient in intellect and knowledge, and childish, petulant, and morose. Christians, if they think about the matter at all, must be indeed wanting in humour not to be struck by the absurdity of the whole scheme of what they call salvation. The fact is, however, that very few indeed ever trouble themselves about whether there is any truth in the Bible story, or any reason in the Christian faith, being quite satisfied to jog along in the old faith of their fathers. The Christian religion, they declare, was good enough for their ancestors, and therefore ought to be good enough for them, little considering the awkward admission involved in the statement. They quite lose sight of the fact that it was a pure matter of chance that they were born in Christian England instead of in Mohammedan Turkey. According to their argument, they are guilty of great wickedness in contributing towards the expense of sending out missionaries to try to convert foreigners from the faith of their fathers. It must be as right for a Turk to embrace the religion of Mohammed, for a Hindoo to embrace Brahmanism, a Chinese Fohism or Confucianism, a Parsee Zoroastrianism, a Thibetian Buddhism, and an African Fetishism, as for a European to embrace Christianity. This appears to me to be as clear as the sun on a bright day; but in vain may one try to make the point manifest to Christians, who appear to “admire the more the less they understand,” as “Saint” Gregory Nazianzen declared

of the Christians of his day, after stating that “words are sufficient to deceive the vulgar.” “There are none so blind as those who will not see”—a fact well known to Eusebius, “the great falsifier of ecclesiastical history,”* who declared, in the thirty-first chapter of his “Evangelical Preparation,” that “it may be lawful and fitting to use falsehood as a medicine for the benefit of those who want to be deceived.”

Another argument sometimes adopted by Christians is that, no matter whether Christianity is based upon historic facts or upon myth, there can be no question whatever that those countries which profess that faith have the highest morality. This, *prima facie*, would appear to be a strong point; but, when submitted to careful criticism, the argument will be found to bear quite a different complexion to what appears on the surface. Russia and Spain cannot be said to be highly moral countries, whose people are more highly civilised and enjoy greater liberty and happiness than those of other countries; and yet these are the very lands where the two original branches of the Christian religion are most faithfully nurtured. The fact is, that the most moral and prosperous communities are those which, while retaining the name of Christian, have bit by bit cast off Christianity and adopted in place of it nineteenth-century morality, a code of ethics based on experience and reason, which has rendered them moral, happy, cleanly, healthy, and free. The people of those countries where the Christian religion is professed with zeal

* So branded by Cardinal Baronius, a sincere Christian advocate of the sixteenth century.

and fidelity, according to divine mandate, are ignorant dirty, immoral, wretched, and in semi-slavery, as everyone knows who has travelled in Spain and Italy.

It is the fashion to give the name of Christianity to the Western morality of this century; but there is as much difference between the morality of to-day and the genuine Christian religion as there is between the north and south poles. The two are the exact antitheses of each other. A moral condition that requires that all men shall be equal before the law, that no man shall be the property of his fellow, and that no man shall have more than one wife at a time, can have no connection whatever with the Christian religion, the sacred book of which teaches us to burn witches alive, to buy and sell slaves, to desert our father, mother, brethren, and children in order to join the ranks of the believers, and to take no thought for the morrow, besides encouraging polygamy, adultery, murder, theft, and personal assaults. There is no use in Christians saying that these immoralities, although found in the Bible, have no influence on believers of the present day, who act up to as high a standard of morality as is at present attainable. The fact remains that the Bible distinctly teaches such abominations, and that the Bible God distinctly orders and encourages them. If Christians do not carry out the orders of their God by buying and selling slaves, etc., they do not faithfully obey the teaching of their religion, and are, consequently, not good Christians.

In Protestant Europe, Canada, and the United States the whole Mosaic cosmogony, with its flat earth theory, creation of man, etc., as taught in Genesis, has been destroyed by Copernicus, Newton, Laplace, and Darwin;

slavery has been abolished; witches are no longer burnt at the stake; polygamy is discontinued; and human sacrifice, adultery, murder, rapine, theft, and personal assaults are no longer justified. Hence the people of these countries ought not to be called Christians, but Sceptics. Why they persist in calling themselves Christians, when they openly disavow the Bible teaching, is, like "the peace of God," that which passeth all understanding; and why they hold so fast to that mathematical absurdity, the Trinity-in-unity, and that most stupid and imbecile fiction of the Crucifixion and Ascension, is, like the three persons who are equal and unequal at the same time, incomprehensible.

In conclusion, there are three excellent reasons why Agnostics and other liberal thinkers ought to consider it their bounden duty to be continually attacking Christianity—of course, in a proper and legitimate manner. The first is because they believe the whole story of the Creation, Fall, and Redemption to be historically untrue, and cannot recognise the ultimate good that will accrue to the race from the propagation of an untruth. The second is because they consider it demoralising to teach the young to do good in hope of reward, and to avoid doing evil from fear of consequences. The third is because the religion is a persecuting one, and is used as a weapon by which unbelieving citizens may be deprived of their just rights and subjected to outrage.

HERBERT JUNIUS HARDWICKE.

Sheffield, March 10th, 1890.

THE BIBLE AND EVOLUTION.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

The Bible, Divine or Human?—Its Inconsistency with Modern Science—The Creation Story of Genesis Summarised—Similar Legends Occur in other Sacred Literature.

NUMEROUS as are the views which the human mind is capable of forming in reference to the interpretation of the Bible, only two rational theories can be advanced in respect to the origin and purpose of the various literary fragments of which it is composed.

Put into the briefest form, the first of these theories is that the Bible is the very word of God, the infinite ruler of the universe, who, in order to declare his will to mankind, and to reveal certain facts in regard to their origin and destiny which, it is alleged, it was quite impossible for them to acquire by their own unaided efforts, employed certain wise men as his amanuenses, and inspired them to record with unerring accuracy all that he considered necessary for human welfare in this world and for salvation in the next.

The second theory is that the various literary fragments which the Bible comprises were written by human and fallible authors, the greater number of whom are unknown, and that it expressed their views on the origin of the world; the creation of man, and his history and development during barbaric ages; the laws which they believed God had framed for the Jewish nation; the progress and vicissitudes of the chosen people; and the gospel which they supposed God had revealed for the benefit of mankind in general.

Of these theories the former has been considerably shaken, if not proved entirely untenable, in recent years, not only by the labours of secular critics, and the results of the researches of men of science, but by the fact that the alleged inspired record has been subjected to many searching revisions at the hands of the learned among the clergy themselves. It is obvious that, even if this divine revelation were originally pure, it was a revelation only to those who first received it. It could not but lose much of its perfection in the course of translation, and those who believed in it during the long period previous to its revision believed in a revelation that was so imperfect that thousands of alterations have been found necessary; and it is generally admitted that the record, even in its revised condition, still contains numerous errors. But, on the supposition that it is a divinely-inspired production, there is no denying that it should be regarded as true in all its parts; for once to call in question, even in the smallest degree, any of its statements, is unquestionably to display a spirit of scepticism, which, pursued to its logical end, would land the inquirer in the position of the Rationalist, who accepts only such portions of it as appear to harmonise with reason, common sense, and humanity. Regarding the Bible, then, in the light of an inspired book, we find ourselves compelled either to repudiate altogether

the plainest teachings of modern science, or so to twist and distort the language of these ancient writings, in order to make it harmonise with known facts, as to render their clearest statements absolutely misleading to all who do not possess the mystical key employed by Christian apologists. But if the Bible be regarded in the shining light thrown upon the subject by the doctrine of evolution, or the gradual unfolding of natural phenomena, we find ourselves in no such position of doubt and difficulty.

No longer is it necessary to believe that God, less than six thousand years ago, by a mere fiat, created the universe, threw into infinite space the innumerable stars and suns, moulded the earth into form, caused the grass to grow and trees to yield fruit, the waters to "bring forth moving creatures that have life," made the beasts of the field, and, as a final effort, produced man from the dust of the earth. When we regard these statements as the record of opinions held by an ancient and ignorant people, all our difficulties are overcome. If we apply ourselves to a rational study of the Bible, discarding altogether the use of theological spectacles, we find in its venerable pages much that is useful and interesting to us as students of nature, and also much that assists us in understanding man's physical, mental, and moral progress in the past. But we also find that, so far from the Bible containing a true record of the events it professes to narrate, a careful consideration of its contents shows that it is inaccurate in its science, false in its history, and bad in its morality. In point of fact, it shows that the primitive man's guesses at the riddle of existence, however natural to an ignorant age, and however useful as a working hypothesis to the simple patriarchs and peasants of those far-off times, were pregnant with all sorts of errors, which it has taken many centuries to correct.

That the results of the researches of scientific men

should be entirely at variance with statements in the Bible is only what might have been expected. The knowledge of the ancient Jews respecting the phenomena of nature was at best of the scantiest character; and it is only natural to suppose that the most learned among them could not attain to that degree of knowledge which was possible to people of more recent ages. Knowledge accumulates in the human mind as gradually as the shells of the little creatures at the bottom of the sea that built up our great chalk beds. And just as the geological deposits of one age differ from those of another, so does the knowledge of one age differ from that of the next. If it is true that all our faculties have been strengthened and developed by effort and struggle, it is no less true that the highest faculty, the mind of man, is the last that has been brought under cultivation, and that, in the course of its development from the rude savage up to the man of the highest intellectual capacity, it has undergone numerous transitions, many of which may be distinctly traced in the religious books of various ancient peoples, and in a marked degree in the sacred writings of the Jews.

It must be remembered that the Bible contains two creation stories, obviously written by different persons at different times, and each contradicting the other in the most positive manner. The first (from Genesis i. 1 to ii. 3) says that God commenced proceedings by "creating the heavens and the earth." Now, here it is obvious enough that the writer meant that God created the universe out of nothing; that at his word of command the "matter and force," or the something of which the "heavens and the earth" were composed, were called into being.

By a knowledge of chemistry, electricity, and the physical sciences generally, we now learn, however, that matter and force are alike indestructible; that not one

atom of them can be destroyed; that, manifold as are the changes through which it is possible for them to pass, not a particle is ever lost; and, being imperishable, it is rational to suppose that they never began to be.

The writers of Genesis, knowing nothing of physical science, conceived that there was only one eternal being—viz., God, and that from him all other existences emanated. Nor were they consistent in their surmises. Having predicated of their deity that he was infinite and eternal, they saw nothing contradictory in an infinite being producing something independent of himself. Yet it seems clear enough now that, if deity created anything, it must have been either out of himself or out of nothing. But it could not have been produced out of himself without limiting himself by so much as was used in the creation or manipulation of the "heaven and the earth." In such case the infinite deity would be rendering himself finite in order to make a world, or we should have the anomaly of an infinite God existing side by side with a finite "heaven and earth," which is an absurdity.

Nor is it conceivable that deity could have produced the "heaven and the earth" out of nothing, since the universe must have been always occupied by the infinite deity, or else the infinite deity must have existed somewhere when there was nowhere for him to exist. Or, the infinite deity being everywhere throughout all eternity, there was something occupying every point in space eternally, and, therefore, to talk of "nothing" would be to use language utterly devoid of meaning. Nothing, as meaning "the absence of something," could not exist in a universe filled by an infinite deity. But metaphysics was not the strong point of the writers of the Pentateuch.

Having created the "heaven and the earth," the Bible story tells us that God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." But the same writer goes on to

state that deity did not make either the sun, moon, or stars until the fourth day. Light and darkness are spoken of as though they were entities, for it is said that God divided the light from the darkness. This was followed by the construction of a solid firmament to divide the waters above the firmament from the waters below, the waters below immediately gathering together and forming the seas and oceans, and leaving the other portion of the earth's crust as "dry land." Then grass, herbs, and fruit-trees grew. Following this, as we have already stated, God created on the fourth day the sun and moon, the one to rule the day, the other the night. "He made the stars also." Out of the waters deity then produced fishes, fowls of the air, and great whales; and, lastly, the beasts of the field and man.

The second account (Genesis ii. 4-25), as Colenso points out, is manifestly composed by a different writer. Notice the chief points of difference. The first writer always speaks of the Creator as Elohim, or God; the second uses the term Jehovah Elohim, or Lord God. In the first narrative the earth emerges from the waters (i. 9, 10), and is therefore saturated with moisture; in the second (ii. 6) the whole face of the ground requires to be moistened. In the first, all fowls that fly are made out of the waters (i. 20); in the second, they are made out of the ground (ii. 19). In the first, man is created in the image of God (i. 27); in the second, he is made out of the dust, and only after eating the forbidden fruit is he said to be like God (ii. 7, iii. 22). In the first, man is made lord of the whole earth (i. 28); in the second, he is merely placed in the Garden of Eden, to dress and keep it (ii. 8, 15). In the first, man and woman are created together as the final step of the whole creation (i. 28); in the second, the beast and birds are created *between* the man and the woman (ii. 7, 8, 19, 22).

Now, if these accounts stood alone, if there were no other records relating to the creation of the universe, or of the world and of all living creatures, it would be our duty to critically examine again and again all the extraordinary statements made in the opening chapters of Genesis.

Thanks, however, to the labour of the students of the so-called sacred literature of the world, no such task is now necessary. The Bible story of creation is only one of a large number of similar stories. We find, from a study of the Zend Avesta, that the Persian myth of creation is in many respects like the myth in the Bible, especially in reference to the alleged fall of man through eating of "forbidden fruit." Similar legends may also be found in Hindoo and Greek literature; but upon the face of them all there is the stamp of a common origin—in point of truth they are but the best guesses of an ignorant people, eager to explain the universe. What modern science has to say in the way of explanation must be left for our next chapter to tell.

GENESIS AND ASTRONOMY.

Recent Progress of Science—Herbert Spencer on Prejudices Against Science—Astronomy—The Nebular Hypothesis—Ignorance of the Writers of Genesis—The Sun and Stars—Ancient Astronomy—Copernicus—Newton—Herschel—Astronomy Banishes the Gods from the Universe.

IMMENSE progress has been made in all the physical sciences during the last two centuries. Indeed, it may be truly said that, since the invention of the printing press, methodised knowledge has accumulated with far greater rapidity than during all previous history. As the beams of science grew more powerful, the flaws and errors in the Bible became increasingly apparent. Hence the Churches trembled and still tremble at the advance of science. Yet, after all, what is this dreaded science? Let Mr. Herbert Spencer answer: "To see the absurdity of the prejudice against it, we need only remark that science is simply a higher development of common knowledge; and that, if science is repudiated, all knowledge must be repudiated along with it. The extremest bigot will not suspect any harm in the observation that the sun rises earlier and sets later in the summer than in the winter, but will rather consider such an observation as a useful aid in fulfilling the duties of life. Well, astronomy is an organised body of similar observations, made with greater nicety, extended to a larger number of objects, and so analysed as to disclose the real arrangement of the heavens, and to dispel our false conceptions

of them. That iron will rust in water, that wood will burn, that long-kept viands become putrid, the most timid sectarian will teach without alarm, as things useful to be known. But these are chemical truths; chemistry is a systematised collection of such facts, ascertained with precision, and so classified and generalised as to enable us to say with certainty, concerning each simple or compound substance, what change will occur in it under given conditions. And thus it is with all the sciences."

No science has greater fascination to the speculative mind than astronomy. Its truths are discovered by careful observation, and by even more careful mathematical calculations. It has been well observed that all science, to become exact, must be expressed in terms of mathematics. In that case, astronomy may be regarded as a fairly exact science. And so indeed it is. The astronomer can predict with absolute certainty many astronomical phenomena a hundred years before their happening. To the very hour he can foretell the next transit of Venus. But marvels such as these were a sealed book to the ancient writers who, in the introductory chapters of Genesis, have given us a picturesque but inaccurate and impossible story of the beginning of the heaven and the earth.

The generally-accepted theory of modern science is that, æons and æons of ages in the past, all that now exists in our solar and sidereal systems—planets, moons, stars, suns—was one mass of gaseous matter at an enormously high temperature.*

* It should be noted that Mr. Norman Lockyer and other astronomers consider nebulae to be scattered swarms of meteorites, which, by condensation and collision, increase in temperature, give rise to extremely hot and bright vapours, and so form different orders of stars.

In the course of untold ages there was a loss of heat in this vast fiery nebula, which brought the particles closer together and set them into a spinning motion, that increased as the particles became more united. From this great whirling mass outer rings were from time to time thrown off, and from these rings still other rings, until there were a multitude of moving bodies in the universe, each revolving round the largest mass near to it.

Our sun in this way became the centre round which a number of planets revolved; these planets being themselves the children of the sun, having been thrown off from it in rings at various intervals; the moons proceeding from the various planets in the same manner. By the spinning motion and the law of attraction all these bodies were rendered globe-like in shape. At this point the nebular hypothesis falls into line with the Copernican theory of the solar system. The Copernican theory accounts for the phenomena of night and day as resulting from the revolution of the earth on its own axis, while summer and winter are explained on the supposition that the earth travels round the sun once a year. There is summer in whichever part of the earth is facing the sun, while in that portion of the earth which is turned away from the sun there is winter.

The statement that light was created on the first day and the sun on the fourth is clear proof that the writer of the first chapter of Genesis was wholly ignorant of such sciences as astronomy or physics. The former teaches us that our planet was originally a part of the sun, and cannot exist as a world for a single instant without it, being held in its orbit by this great central attraction; while the latter makes known to us that light is not an entity, but a phenomenon—a mode of motion; and, so far as our earth is concerned, we derive all our

light from the sun. But, thinking that light was something substantial and independent—something that could exist by itself, like air and water, and that it could be separated from darkness, which was also regarded as an entity—the writer of Genesis saw nothing inconsistent in his statements that God said, "Let there be light," and there was light, on the first day, and that he created sun, moon, and stars on the fourth. How should he? He did not know that, hundreds of years after the hand with which he penned the story of the creation was mingled with the dust, religious zealots would proclaim that his writings were divinely inspired. He did not know that thousands of people would regard his pious and simple guesses as God-given truths. Nor did he know that the investigations of men of science would one day reveal the absolute absurdity of his statements. So he wrote on confidently, with the air of one who never dreamt of the possibility of contradiction.

But human knowledge grows, and day by day the dreams of the past give place to the realities of the present, the fancies of yesterday to the facts of to-day. The sun we now know is the grand centre of our planetary system, by whose attractive power the planets are held in their respective orbits, and from whose source we receive all our light and heat.

Of the magnitude of this great orb it is impossible to convey any adequate idea. We know, however, that the ancient writers of the Bible had no conception of its vastness, but regarded it as a brilliant light hung up in the heavens to give us light by day, while the moon served a similar purpose at night.

While it is impossible to convey an adequate idea of the vastness of this great burning mass by mere arithmetic, still, as this is the only method by which any notion of its immensity can be conveyed to the human mind at all, we may contemplate the stupendous

magnitude of this body by certain comparisons and by reference to the following figures. By various calculations, the diameter of the sun has been found to be 867,000 miles. A train, travelling thirty miles an hour, would require more than ten years to complete a journey round the sun. Including its atmosphere, our great luminary is more than thirteen million times as large as the earth. If we represent the sun by a globe about two feet in diameter, a pea at a distance of 215 feet will represent the earth.

Our early ancestors had no idea of the vastness of the sun, and they were doubtless led to believe that it was not very large because of its great distance from the earth; and when we learn that it is no less than ninety-three millions of miles away from the earth, we cannot wonder at the error into which their lack of knowledge caused them to fall. To form some idea, however vague, of what this means, let us take two familiar illustrations. A train going at the speed of thirty miles an hour, and starting on January 1st, 1890, would not arrive at the sun till about the year 2242. Or, again, a cannon-ball may be shot out of the mouth of a cannon and sent spinning through space at the rate of five hundred miles an hour. Travelling at this enormous speed, it would take a cannon-ball more than twenty-one years to reach the sun.

With these facts in our minds, it is easy to see that the Bible writers had no conception of either the distance of the sun from the earth or its vast proportions. And their ignorance is even more apparent in reference to the stars, for they represent that, while it took deity six days to fashion the earth, and reduce its original chaos to order, he threw into the vast expanse, at one single instant, all the stars that stud the universe, and shed light and heat over myriads of worlds.

The writer of the first chapter of Genesis entertained

the crudest and most primitive notions both of the distance of the stars from the sun or the earth, and of their magnitude. He appears to have thought that this earth was the only world, and that all the heavenly bodies were unimportant auxiliaries. The universe to him consisted merely of this earth, which he believed to be walled about on every hand by an overhanging, arch-like solid firmament.

When the poet Thomson finely wrote :

"With what an awful, world-revolving power
Were first the unwieldy planets launch'd along
Th' illimitable void ! thus to remain
Amid the flux of many thousand years,
That oft has swept the toiling race of men
And all their laboured monuments away,
Firm, unremitting, matchless, in their course ;
To the kind-tempered change of night and day,
And of the seasons ever stealing round,
Minutely faithful"—

he was introducing into his poetic view of the creation hints which he borrowed from modern astronomy, and which would have greatly astonished the unlearned recorder of the Six Days' work. No idea of the "illimitable void" through which the multitudinous stars continually coursed appears to have entered the recorder's thoughts. To him the earth was flat, and the sun, moon, and stars fixed in the heavens like sun-burners, or electric lights on the roofs of theatres or great halls.

The writer of the book of Joshua was no less ignorant, for, according to him, at the command of the Israelitish chieftain, the "sun and the moon stood still"—a statement which is absurd on the face of it, since, so far as this earth is concerned, the sun does not move, but the earth revolves round it. It is a declaration, moreover, which could only have been made in an age of supreme ignorance of the elementary principles of astronomy. Many divines have sought to explain away the absurdity

of the inspired author by declaring that what actually took place was that the earth stood still, and this, it is alleged, gave the appearance described by the Bible writer. But this only renders the passage more ridiculous from a scientific standpoint than before. For, as the earth, besides rotating on its axis, is travelling round the sun at a speed almost equivalent to a thousand miles an hour, the stoppage of the earth's revolution would have meant the precipitation into space of all animated beings, and the probable engulfment of the earth by the sun.

A careful study of the pages of the Bible will show that all its writers, from the author of the first chapter of Genesis to the last chapter of Revelation, attributed to St. John the Divine, proceeded on the assumption that the earth was the centre of the universe. Nobody can blame them for it; they were, doubtless, perfectly honest; and, if the priesthood of subsequent ages had not claimed "divine inspiration" for the writings in which this view is set forth, early astronomers—or astrologers, as they were called—would have deserved nothing but praise for their earnest guesses at truth.

In the evolution of the human mind the study of the heavenly bodies underwent important changes. Human life at best is short, and few are the facts which even long-lived astronomers could gather for the benefit of their fellows. The learned Josephus thought that "God indulged the antediluvians with a long life that they might bring astronomy and geometry to perfection." If that were the case, then undoubtedly the intention of deity was never realised, unless, in consequence of the antediluvian astronomers having very inadequate means of making known their accumulated knowledge, much of it was lost either in the teaching, or, as a religious writer seriously suggests, "in the flood." In other words, it must have been washed "from the tables of the memory"

of "righteous" Noah and his (possibly) "righteous," but probably very ignorant, family.

The Chaldeans, the Egyptians, and Chinese appear to have made astronomy an important study, and with some useful results. The Egyptians conceived that the planets Mercury and Venus revolved like satellites around the sun; but they believed the earth to be stationary, and the sun, moon, and stars to revolve round it. The Greeks, too, cultivated the study of astronomy, and Pythagoras, who lived more than five hundred years before Christ, framed a scheme of the universe which curiously shadowed forth the Copernican theory. He taught that the universe was a sphere, and that round its central fire revolved the sun, the moon, the earth, and the five planets known to antiquity.

But it was not till Copernicus, in the sixteenth century, formulated this system afresh, with considerable improvements, that it began to be accepted even by cultivated persons. Galileo was condemned for preaching what was regarded as a heathen and "Pythagorean" doctrine, and had to recant or die. He preferred to recant. Descartes, rather than offend the Church of Rome, suppressed a work in which he treated of the revolution of the earth. Bruno, more brave, chose rather to die at the stake than yield up what he believed to be true.

The invention of the telescope, the wonderful discoveries made with its aid by Galileo and others, all tended to confirm the principles laid down by Copernicus, and to open up a wider field of study for future astronomers. With a still further improvement of the telescope, and the manufacture of one 120 feet in length, great strides were made in astronomical science.

In the year 1666, in his twenty-fourth year of age, Sir Isaac Newton made his wonderful discovery of the law of gravitation. While sitting in his garden the young scientist saw an apple fall from a tree, an incident which

led him to numerous important reflections. First of all, he thought that, as all bodies lighter than the earth were irresistibly attracted towards it, so it might be that this law of attraction or gravitation acted in other regions besides the earth, and that this law extended as far as the moon, whose motion would necessarily be influenced by it. In his "Principia" Sir Isaac Newton very largely elaborates this theory. He also constructed the first reflecting telescope.

Not many remarkable results were obtained in astronomy from this point until Sir William Herschel directed his large telescopes towards the heavens. Then many important discoveries were made, which not only extended the astronomical view of the planetary system, but also of the sidereal heavens.

Sir William Herschel's son, following in his father's footsteps, continued the work, and, with the aid of Sir J. South, made a catalogue of 380 double and triple stars, determining with the utmost precision and accuracy their distances and angles of position.

From this time down to the present, extraordinary progress has been made, so that it may be truly said that not only are most of the movements of the heavenly bodies known; not only can the distances of some of the stars be determined; not only can eclipses of sun or moon be accurately foretold; not only can the composition of comets be demonstrated, but Professor Tyndall has carried experimental science so far as to determine the weight of a comet's tail.

All this knowledge, it will be observed, is of slow growth. Changes undoubtedly have taken place in the heavenly bodies themselves during the thousands of years that have elapsed since the early astrologers or the Biblical writers first devoted their attention to the study of celestial phenomena. But no such changes have occurred to account for the inverted view of the subject

which our early ancestors entertained. To them the stars were small luminaries fixed in the heavens to give the earth light by night. They were but twinkling tapers, or, as in Lorenzo's fancy, "patines of bright gold." Now, however, they are discovered to be immense bodies, millions, or in some cases billions, of miles away from the earth; some of them are found to be great suns; others, probably, are so distant that the light from them has not yet reached the earth, notwithstanding the immense speed at which it travels. "There is only one star in the whole heavens, a bright star called Alpha, in the constellation of the Centaur, which is known to be about 20,000,000,000,000,000 of miles from the earth. All the other stars, of which many millions are visible through powerful telescopes, are further off than this."*

The study of astronomy, in addition to revealing many facts with which we were previously unacquainted, has done more than any other science to banish the gods from the universe and to make known the unity of nature. The astronomer finds that he can set no limits to nature; that he can neither scale her heights nor penetrate her depths; that, go as far, in any given direction, as he may, there is still boundless space, beyond which no human eye has penetrated, or probably can penetrate.

Man's faculties are finite; how, then, can he possibly grasp the infinite—whether it be called nature or God?

* "Modern Science and Modern Thought," by Samuel Laing.

GENESIS AND BIOLOGY.

Errors of Genesis Regarding the Appearance of Animal Forms—Geological Strata and their Fossil Remains—Proofs of the Antiquity of Man—Haeckel on the Pedigree of Man—The Origin of Life.

BIOLOGY, or the science which treats of all forms of animated matter, is, like physiology and palæontology, a very young science. Man has regarded living forms in the light of "special creations" for so many thousands of years that it required an age of great and general intellectual enlightenment to be reached before even the most courageous among men of science would be bold enough to study any forms of life apart from the accepted theological view. For they would doubtless reason that, if God created every living thing either out of the water or out of the earth, it was but reasonable to suppose that he made them very much as we find them to-day. If, for instance, God made a wolf or a bear, and if it is admitted that like always produces like, then it would be rational to conclude that wolves and bears would produce wolves and bears of the same type for all time. On the other hand, if God made man, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, by parity of reasoning it would be rational to conclude that man would remain man forever. And if there were any variations, they would be merely slight and unimportant, and insufficient to cause the slightest doubt that all men were brothers, and proceeded from the original *genus homo*.

But when men of science came to study geology with

an open mind, and with sufficient courage to proclaim the results of their investigations and deductions, it was found that the order in which, according to the Bible, the forms of life made their appearance on the earth was totally wrong, and that, whereas Genesis says that they appeared in the following order—(1) fishes and birds, (2) mammalia and reptiles, (3) man—science reveals the fact that the proper order was: (1) crustacea, (2) fishes, (3) reptiles and birds, (4) mammalia generally, (5) man. Indeed, geology demonstrates that we have millions and billions of fossil shells in the Cambrian period, long before the existence of fishes; then the great Devonian fish period; then the Saurian period; long afterwards came the archaic animals of the mammoth family; then those still nearer approaching the types of animals belonging to the history of man; and, finally, man with his contemporaries. It will thus be seen that we have six periods instead of three. To go more minutely into the subject, it may be said that, in the Plutonic or unstratified series, no life-forms appear, the conditions not being favourable. They first come to view in the stratified rocks, of which the Palæozoic (or primary) formation is subdivided into seven periods:—

1. *Laurentian*, containing fossil remains of the foraminifera, some of the first living organisms.
2. *Huronian*, containing fossil remains of the lower organised molluscs.
3. *Cambrian*, containing fossil remains of sponges, sea weeds, star fishes, sea lilies, lowly shell fish, marine worms, and the first land plants.
4. *Silurian*, fossil remains of coral, chambered spiral shell fish, crabs, sea worms, and bony plates and scales of a low form of fish.
5. *Devonian*, fossil land plants, fishes belonging to shark, ray, and sturgeon families, and first fossil insect.

6. *Carboniferous*, fossil scorpions, beetles, and amphibians.

7. *Permian*, fossil reptiles.

The secondary division includes:—

1. *Triassic*, gigantic reptiles and first mammals (small marsupials).

2. *Jurassic*, or *Oölitic*, bird-reptiles, and several species of marsupials.

3. *Cretaceous*, fossils of new bird-reptiles.

The tertiary division embraces:—

1. *Eocene* (dawn of recent life), consisting of sandstone, limestone, sands, clays, marls, coral rags, and lignites, and containing fossil equine forms, birds, reptiles, bats, and marsupials.

2. *Meiocene*, containing fossil apes and marsupials.

3. *Pleiocene*, fossil apes, bears, and hyenas.

4. *Pleistocene*, fossil remains of apes and men, implements of stone, bone, and horn, etc.*

Let us now take a brief glance at the evidence which palæontology affords with regard to the natural history of man:—

1. Flint implements, which indicate the great antiquity of man, have been discovered in certain strata.

2. These flint implements are found side by side with the bones of extinct animals.

3. The skulls of human beings are found in caves, also with the remains of extinct animals.

Sir John Lubbock, in his work on "Pre-Historic Times," after examining the evidence of palæontology, says that the so-called flint instruments are of human workmanship, and that they are of the same age as the beds in which they are found, and the bones of extinct animals with which they occur; and that the beds in which they were deposited belong to a period vastly

* See Dr. Hardwicke's "Evolution and Creation."

anterior to the date assigned by Archbishop Usher to the creation of the world (4004 B.C.).*

But to turn from generalities to particulars.

In 1774 a scientist, named J. F. Esper, made a discovery in Bavaria of the remains of human bones mingled with remains of the northern bear and other species then unknown. In 1797 John Frere, an Englishman, made a similar discovery in Suffolk.

In 1826 Tournal, of Narbonne, made some important discoveries in Aube, France, where he found bones of the bison and reindeer cut and carved by the hand of man, together with remains of edible shell fish, which must have been deposited by some one who dwelt there.

Later, in 1833, Schmerling found in some caverns in Belgium two human skulls surrounded by teeth of rhinoceros, elephant, bear, and hyena, all of extinct species.

In 1842, and again in 1847, important discoveries were made in Devonshire, at a place called Kent's Cavern;† while, in 1857, the Neanderthal skull was discovered, of which Professor Huxley wrote that it was "the most brutal of all known human skulls, resembling those of the apes."

Discoveries of a remarkable character were made in 1863 and 1864, of human remains, along with bones of mammoth, rhinoceros, and other extinct animals. Still later, in 1868, in the valley of the Seine, portions of human skeletons were found in the same beds where palæolithic implements had been embedded.

This, then, is some of the palæontological evidence—evidence which not only demonstrates the vast antiquity of man, but shows also the gradual evolutionary process

* On this subject, consult also Sir Charles Lyell's "Antiquity of Man." An excellent summary of the question is given in Mr. Laing's "Modern Science and Modern Thought."

† See W. Pengelly on "The Cave Men of Devonshire."

which has been going on through the vast epochs over which the lives of extinct animals and man have stretched.

But, to understand the wide-reaching character of this evolutionary method in nature, we must glance for a while at the known facts of general biology. For this purpose, let us take Professor Haeckel's statement on the subject.

In his "Pedigree of Man" the Professor gives the following order to the appearance of living forms on the earth:—First, the "Moneron," a structureless albuminous atom of bioplasm, which is so simple a form of life as to be even without a cell. We have, then, this protoplasm developing into, firstly, a number of single nucleated cells, called *Amœbæ*, and these in turn into masses of nucleated cells, called *Synamœbæ*. After these come *Ciliata*, which consist of *Synamœbæ*, covered with vibratile cilia. From these we pass to *Gastrœada*, and from these again to a low form of worm called *Archelminthes*; then by slow processes are evolved from these lowly forms *Acrania*, or first vertebrate animals, "without skulls, brains, central heart, jaws, or limbs, but with a true vertebral cord." We thus reach the first vertebrate class. But of vertebrates there are eight classes:—

1. Lancelet, or *Amphioxus*.
2. *Cyclostoma*.
3. *Pisces*.
4. *Dipnoi*.
5. *Amphibia*.
6. *Reptilia*.
7. *Aves*.
8. *Mammalia*.

Then there are fourteen orders of *Mammalia*, from the water-frequenting *Monotremata* (*Ornithorhynchus*) to the *Simiæ* (apes). Next we come to species of anthro-

poid apes, and lastly to man. Haeckel's arrangement of these latter is as follows:—

ANTHROPOIDA.	
Asiatic (Satyri) Brachycephali	{ 1. Lesser Orang (<i>Satyrus Morio</i>) 2. Greater Orang (<i>Satyrus Orang</i>)
African Pongines Dolicocephali (long-skulled)	{ 1. Chimpanzee (<i>Pongo Troglodytes</i>) 2. Gorilla (<i>Pongo Gorilla</i>)
HOMINES.	
Woolly-haired (Ulotrichi) Dolicocephali	{ 1. Papuan (<i>Homo Papua</i>) 2. Hottentot (<i>Homo Hottentotus</i>) 3. Caffre (<i>Homo Cafer</i>) 4. Negro (<i>Homo Niger</i>)
Straight-haired (Lissotrichi). Mostly Brachycephali (short-skulled) or Mesocephali (medium length of skull); a few Dolicocephali	{ 5. Australian (<i>Homo Australis</i>) 6. Malay (<i>Homo Polynesius</i>) 7. Mongol (<i>Homo Mongolus</i>) 8. Polar Man (<i>Homo Arcticus</i>) 9. American (<i>Homo Americanus</i>) 10. Caucasian (<i>Homo Mediterraneus</i>)

Now, if we take the above statement of the evolutionary process in the order of the development of living forms, we shall find by careful investigation that it is corroborated in every particular by the sister sciences, geology, palæontology, and biology.

Nor is this all. The evolutionist carries his investigation still further. He studies the animal form in the foetus, and finds that at various stages the brain of the human being resembles that of fish, reptile, bird, etc., and so on until it reaches the highest degree of development—viz., the human. So that many scientists declare to-day that the history of the human being in the foetus is "a picture in little, or outline of the history of the race."

Here, then, we have ample evidence of the ignorance of the Biblical writers. Science teaches, the facts of geology demonstrate, that the age of the earth is to be measured, not by thousands, but probably millions of years; that the earth has undergone numerous changes

of which there is no mention in historic times. Palæontology, as Haeckel well says, "furnishes at the present time, in many ways, the most reliable and most accessible kind of evidence as to the order of creation in the past. For the fossils, or petrified remains of plants and animals, that we meet with in the sedimentary strata of the earth's crust are, in truth, the fossil remains or impressions of those organisms, long dead, that hundreds of thousands or many millions of years before peopled our earth. Among these organisms, also, in conformity with evolution, must have been the veritable ancestors of the species of plants and animals in existence to-day, and the allies more or less closely related of those dead and gone ancestors. Hence, many naturalists, especially those who wish to proceed as carefully and exactly as is possible, as well as those who would extend palæontology yet further, place in that science their greatest hope, and regard it as the sole reliable evidence in favour of phylogeny."

But it will be said: "If the doctrine of evolution takes us back by gradual stages to the lowest form of life, which we find to be a protoplasmic germ, what theory does the evolutionist accept in regard to the origin of life?" The evolutionist does not pretend to give an authoritative answer to the question. But he has his belief. It is this: Matter is indestructible; force is also indestructible; and combinations of matter and force cause all the phenomena of the universe. In view of this sublime potency of nature we are tempted, as Professor Tyndall remarked in his address to the British Association in 1874, "to close to some extent with Lucretius, when he affirms that 'Nature is seen to do all things spontaneously of herself without the meddling of the gods;' or with Bruno, when he declares that Matter is not 'that mere empty capacity which philosophers have pictured her to be, but the universal

mother who brings forth all things as the fruit of her own womb.'"

Organic life, the evolutionist believes, evolved out of what is called "inanimate matter." Is this unreasonable? Every particle of matter in the universe is in motion, every atom in constant activity. How do we know that any particular atom is dead? What we call death is merely change. The doctrine of evolution involves the affirmation that matter and force contain the potentiality of all forms of life. Life is motion. The sun's motion on its axis, the moon's revolution round the earth, the growing trees, the running rivers, the surging waves of the sea, are all manifestations of life; and just as the vegetable and animal kingdoms are continually unfolding from simple forms to complex, so the vast universe is one ceaseless, but gradual, unfolding of natural forces; and this evolution seems likely to go on forever.

OLD TESTAMENT MYTHS.

*Legends of the "Fall"—Persian—Greek—The Flood—
Confusion of Tongues—Samson—Jonah.*

WE have seen how completely antagonistic are the teachings of the Bible to the demonstrated facts of modern science; and many of the ancient stories concerning the origin of man and of his supposed early history are no less opposed to common sense and the well-attested evidence which is open to every student of science and ancient history. Indeed, by the comparative study of religions and "folk lore" in connection with early races of mankind, we are able to trace many of the absurd stories in the Bible to much more ancient, and in some cases to original, sources.

Most Christians believe the story of the "fall of man," as narrated in the third chapter of Genesis, to be literally true. And they are perfectly consistent in so doing; for, if the story of the "fall" be merely a myth, upon what ground can they rest their belief in the atonement? If Adam did not sin, why should Christ die? But the Christian who believes that Adam and Eve were tempted in the Garden of Eden about six thousand years ago can have heard very little about similar stories to be found in Persian, Greek, or Chinese literature, or must be so obtuse of understanding as to imagine that the later productions of the Hebrews contained the true statement of affairs, while earlier books were merely copies.

Take the Persian myth of the parents of the human

race, quoted by Kalisch from the Zend-Avesta. It runs thus: "The first couple, Meshia and Meshiane, lived originally in purity and innocence. Perpetual happiness was promised to them by Ormuzd, the creator of every good gift, if they persevered in their virtue. But an evil demon (Dev) was sent to them by Ahriman, the representative of everything noxious and sinful. He appeared unexpectedly in the form of a serpent, and gave them the fruit of a wonderful tree, Hòm, which imparted immortality, and had the power of restoring the dead to life. Thus evil inclinations entered their hearts; all their moral excellence was destroyed. Ahriman himself appeared under the form of the same reptile, and completed the work of seduction. They acknowledged him instead of Ormuzd as the creator of everything good, and the consequence was that they forfeited forever the internal happiness for which they were destined. They killed beasts and clothed themselves in their skins; they built houses, but paid not the debt of gratitude to the deity. The evil demons thus obtained still more perfect power over their minds, and called forth envy, hatred, discord, and rebellion, which raged in the bosom of the families." The learned and painstaking author significantly adds: "It is unnecessary to point out the parallel features of this legend with the Mosaic narrative. It contains almost all the materials of the latter: the remarkable tree, the serpent, the degradation, and fall of man. It is, then, evident that all these traits are not specifically Mosaic. They belonged to the common traditional lore of the Asiatic nations. They cannot, therefore, be *essential* in the system of Mosaic theology. They serve to represent ideas, but are not indispensable for them. They are the vehicle used to convey certain truths; but these truths might have been expressed in a thousand other shapes. The truths are unchangeable and necessary, the form is

indifferent and accidental." This latter remark may or may not be correct, but it completely eats away the infallibility of the Pentateuch.

Edward Clodd tells us, in his admirable work entitled "The Childhood of Religions" (page 45), that "the Tibetans and Mongolians believe that the first human beings were as gods; but, desiring a certain sweet herb, they ate of it, and lower feelings were thus aroused within them; their wings dropped off; their beauty faded; and the years of their life were made few and filled with bitterness. Passing by any full account of the Hindoo story of a tree of life on a mountain ever bathed in sunshine, where no sin could enter, and where dreadful dragons kept the way to the heavenly plants and fruits, and also of the Greek belief that far away there were the islands of the blessed, with a garden full of golden apples, guarded by an unsleeping serpent, we have the Greek myth, which tells us that the first men were happy and without work, but with a desire to assert their power, and, withal, defy or mock the gods. Then Prometheus shaped a human form out of clay, and stole forbidden fire from heaven wherewith to give it life. This made Zeus angry, and he laid a plan by which the evils that mankind dreaded, and which were sealed within in a box, guarded by Epimetheus, the brother of Prometheus, should be let loose. He ordered the lord of fire to fashion the first woman, who by her charms should bring misery to man. Then the gods enriched her with beauty, cunning, and fair speech, naming her Pandora, or all-gifted; and Zeus took her to Epimetheus, who, contrary to the advice of his brother to accept nothing from the gods, made her his wife, so smitten was he with her beautiful face and so beguiled by her smooth words. She had not been long with him before she opened the box, whence came forth strife and sickness, and all other ills that afflict mankind; and then,

hastily closing it, she shut up hope within, so that no comfort was given to men."

Other religions can boast of their stories of the "fall of man," and each accounts for the entrance of original sin into the world in some similar childish and irrational fashion.

Not the least striking feature in the Bible legends is the manifest artlessness with which myth is retailed as sober fact. The strange eventful romances of the Flood and the Confusion of Tongues were recorded as genuine history. The writer did not know that all the water in all the oceans, seas, rivers, and lakes would have been insufficient to cover the earth to the height of the mountain of Ararat. He was quite ignorant of the fact that other nations of the earth had their stories of floods, and that, in point of fact, each nation that was visited by an inundation regarded it in the light of a universal deluge.

In respect to the Confusion of Tongues, the writer was so supremely *naïve* as to overlook not only the fact that men speaking a new language for the first time would not be able to understand each other, but that each would not be able to understand himself. He did not know that language was only to be acquired by experience—that it is a growth. No sensible person would have expected him to know these things, if it had not been claimed for him that he was divinely inspired. But he ought to have known a myth from a true story, just as modern writers know their fictions are not facts. It would require a man to be a very practised liar before he could induce himself to believe in his own lies. It is possible to come across such a person occasionally; but surely deity would not be likely to select such a one as amanuensis.

Another writer, Tuch, gives the following account of the Chaldean myth of the Flood. He says: "Many

legends of a Flood are handed down to us from antiquity, which represent the inundation to have been in some cases a partial one, as in the Samothracian Flood ('Diod. Sic.,' v. 47), explaining geographical relations, and in other cases describe it as a general flood over the whole earth. [There is no ancient *Egyptian* legend of this kind, so that Egypt certainly was not the source of them.] Greece furnishes the accounts of two. In one, Oxyges survives a universal flood, which had covered the whole surface of the earth to such a depth that he conducts his vessel upon the waves through the air. The other Grecian legend, which relates to Deucalion, is more complete, but, like that of Oxyges, is only narrated by *later* writers. Neither Homer nor Hesiod makes any mention of a Flood; and even Herodotus, though he mentions Deucalion (i. 56), does not connect the name with any inundation. Pindar first mentions Deucalion's Flood ('Olymp.,' ix. 62-71);* and it is given in a more perfect form by Lucian ('De Deâ Syr.,' xii., xiii.). The object of the Hellenic deluge appears to have been the annihilation of the brazen race, which, according to Hesiod, perished *without* any Flood. The race, which was destroyed, had acted wickedly, disregarded oaths and the rights of hospitality, attended to no expostulations, and in the end became necessarily punished. Jupiter sent violent torrents of rain, and the earth, says Lucian, opened in order to let the immense body of water run off. Deucalion, the *only righteous man*, entered the vessel which he had made, with his wife Pyrrha [Luc.,

* "Man's first abode Deucalion reared,
When from Parnassus' glittering crown,
With Pyrrha paired, the Seer came down.
Behind them rose their unborn sons,
The new-named laity of stones,
A homogeneous mortal throng."

—MOORE'S "Pind.," i. 94.

"with his wives"], and, according to the later form of the legend, took with him different kinds of animals in pairs. After nine days and nine nights he landed on the summit of Parnassus, which remained uncovered ('Paus.,' x. 6); while the greatest part of Greece was laid under water, so that only a few men, who had fled to the highest mountains, escaped alive. Plutarch ('De Soll. Anim.,' xiii.) mentions the dove, which Deucalion employed to find out if the rain had ceased or the heavens had become clear."*

Dean Milman gives the following translation of "The Story of a Fish," in "Nala Damayanti, and Other Poems," pp. 114, 115, where Manu is represented as addressed by Brahma in the form of a fish:—

"When the awful time approaches—hear from me what thou must do.
In a little time, O blessed! all the firm and seated earth,
All that moves upon its surface, shall a deluge sweep away.
Near it comes—of all creation the ablution-day is near;
Therefore, what I now forewarn thee, may thy highest weal
secure.

All the fixed and all the moving, all that stirs or stirreth not,
Lo! of all the time approaches, the tremendous time of doom.
Build thyself a ship, O Manu, strong, with cables well prepared;
And thyself, with the seven sages, mighty Manu, enter in.
All the living seeds of all things, by the Brahmins named of yore,
Place them first within the vessel, well secured, divided well.

* * * * *

Earth was seen no more, no region, nor the intermediate space;
All around a waste of water—water all, and air, and sky.

"In the whole world of creation, princely son of Bharata!
None was seen but those seven sages, Manu only and the fish.
Years on years, and still unwearied, drew that fish the bark along,
Till at length it came, where lifted Himavan its loftiest peak.
There at length it came, and, smiling, thus the fish addressed the
sage:

'To the peak of Himalaya bind thou now the stately ship.'

* Quoted by Bishop Colenso, "Pentateuch," pp. 38c, 381.

At the fish's mandate quickly, to the peak of Himavan
Bound the sage his bark, and ever to this day that loftiest peak
Bears the name of Naubandhana, from the binding of the bark."

Writing on the probable origin of Aryan myths, Mr. Edward Clodd, in his admirable book already referred to, says that "a careful study shows that they had for the larger part their birth in the ideas called forth by the changing scenery of the heavens in dawn and dusk, in sunrise and sunset, and the myriad shades and fleeting forms which lie between them, the dawn being the source of the richest myths. Of course every myth and legend is not to be thus accounted for, because that which is human and personal takes shape and substance likewise. The mood of mind caused by things sad or joyful in the life of man; the sense of right and wrong, and the knowledge that within us the battle between these two is being fought; these, which are to those who feel deeply more real than even sunrises and sunsets, have had a large share in adding to the legends which make us creep closer to the light and move now to laughter and now to tears. Then many events of history have been so misunderstood as to become mythical. Fable has been promoted into history; history has been lowered into fable; and history and fable have been mixed and gathered round great names, such as Cyrus, Charlemagne, and by far greater names than theirs."

Again, in his "Childhood of the World," Mr. Clodd says, in writing on myths: "In seeking to account for the kind of life which seemed to be (and really was, although not as he thought of it) in all things around, man shaped the most curious notions into the forms of myths, by which is meant a fanciful story, founded on something real. If to us a boat or a ship becomes a sort of personal thing, especially when named after anyone; if 'Jack Frost' and 'Old Father Christmas,' which

are but names, seem also persons to the mind of a little child, we may readily see how natural it is for savages to think that the flame licking up the wood is a living thing whose head could be cut off; to believe that the gnawing feeling of hunger is caused by a lizard or a bird in the stomach; to imagine that the echoes which the hills threw back came from the dwarfs who dwelt among them, and that the thunder was the rumbling of the heaven god's chariot wheels."

The story of Samson slaying the Philistines is decidedly mythical. Samson is a sun god. With his great strength he overcomes the evil monsters of darkness and cruelty. The story of Jonah's interesting visit to Nineveh, and his three nights' lodging in the interior of a great fish, is also a tale built upon a sun myth—a myth describing the phenomenon of night devouring the sun. There are numerous other myths in the Bible, and many of them have an interesting story cleverly interwoven with them.

It may be observed, however, that the mythical period, the age when such stories had their beauty and utility, has long passed; it was, indeed, a very remote period in the world's history—the "babyhood of the world." Then everything bore a mythical aspect. The sun was regarded as a living being; so was the moon; and the stars were considered to be the children of the sun, which he only allowed to be seen at night.

Many of the nursery stories of to-day have their origin in ancient myths; and at Christmas time, when our children are being amused at the theatre in witnessing the ever-welcome pantomime, they little know that their favourite stories of "Jack the Giant-Killer," "Cinderella and the Glass Slipper," and "Little Red Riding Hood," upon which the burlesque part of the pantomime is built, are but old Aryan, Chinese, and Greek myths, which have been clothed in manifold forms by the various nations of the earth.

And just as in youth we outgrow these simple, childish stories, and in manhood require something more real, more true to nature, even in professed fiction, so the maturer mind of modern civilisation rejects the puerilities which satisfied men in earlier days, and requires more substantial food, which can be found only by a diligent study of nature. Experience has shown that the acquisition and application of such knowledge have built up a world more wonderful and beautiful than was ever depicted even in the myths and fables of old.

CHAPTER V.

UNHISTORICAL CHARACTER OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

Colenso on the Pentateuch—The Patriarchs—The Exodus—Miraculous Gluttony—Balaam's Ass—"Guesses after Truth."

IN the introductory chapter to his searching examination of the Pentateuch, Bishop Colenso writes these very significant words: "The result of my inquiry is this, that I have arrived at the conviction—as painful to myself at first as it may be to my reader, though painful now no longer under the clear shining of the light of truth—that the Pentateuch, as a whole, cannot possibly have been written by Moses or by anyone acquainted personally with the facts which it professes to describe, and, further, that the (so-called) Mosaic narrative, by whomsoever written, and though imparting to us, as I fully believe it does, revelations of the Divine will and character, cannot be regarded as historically true." In our previous chapters we have shown that, whatever "revelations" the Bible imparts, it cannot be regarded as scientifically true.

Is it historically true? Colenso says not, though his ecclesiastical position, his worldly interests, his early education, all invited him to accept, without inconvenient inquiry, the literal veracity of the Scripture. Yet, to this brave divine, truth was of more importance than the Scripture, even though it bore the stamp of alleged Divine authority.

History, forsooth! Who that has cast away the

spectacles of faith, and opened wide the eyes of reason, could so set at naught natural probabilities and the testimony of experience as to receive the Bible as historically true? History means—if it means anything at all—a faithful narrative of events that have happened, stated exactly in the order in which they have occurred, without any fictitious adornments to make them pleasant, interesting, or palatable reading.

No doubt the writers of Genesis believed that God made man in his own image a few thousand years ago; but their belief did not make it a fact. And if God did not create man as man, but imparted the potency and promise of all forms of life to masses of protoplasm, then, in this respect, Genesis is wrong and unhistoric. On the other hand, if God made man perfect, it is folly to talk of a perfect man doing something that showed him to be imperfect.

Nor can it be regarded as historically true that Adam lived for nine hundred and thirty years, or Methuselah for nine hundred and sixty-nine years, without the supposition that *years* did not mean, in those days, so long a period of time as they do now, or that human beings had a materially different kind of organisation from ours—suppositions for which there is not the slightest warranty in fact.

Then how could we regard it as historically true that Cain went into the land of Nod and married a woman who was not his mother, when there was no other woman in existence?

The story of the flood, whether regarded as universal or local, is too ludicrously absurd to be seriously discussed. The myriads of species of animals of all climes could not have been brought within the dimensions of Noah's Ark; to say nothing of their provender.

To the legend of the Tower of Babel we need not devote any grave consideration. It represents an

omniscient God coming down to ascertain the truth of hearsay information, and confounding the tongues of the people in order to prevent them from doing what he must have known was an impossibility—that is, building a tower that should reach to heaven.

The lives of the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob—are purely mythical, founded, for the most part, upon astrological phenomena.

The story of Abraham preparing to plunge a dagger into the heart of his only son, to demonstrate his faith in Jahveh, and the romantic narrative of Joseph's treatment by his brethren, and his subsequent triumph over them in Egypt, may be regarded in the light of primitive dramas; they are certainly not historical truths.

When we come to Exodus we are confronted with even more extraordinary narratives than those in Genesis. The poor Egyptians, who, in their history, experienced the most appalling injustice from various nations, never, happily for them, suffered the infliction of the horrible plagues said to have been wrought by Moses at the express command of Jehovah. It may be safely affirmed that the heart of Pharaoh—stony as it may have been—was never hard enough to suffer all the land of Egypt to be covered with noisome vermin, and then, in order that his magicians might show their power, call upon them to produce more. It would be equally safe to assert that the plagues of Egypt did not kill the same cattle many times over, and that the Israelites could not have maintained vast multitudes of cattle in the wilderness, "a land of deserts and pits, a land of drought and of the shadow of death" (Jer. ii. 6).

In a community of two million people Colenso calculates that about 264 children would be born every day, and, as the birth-offerings were, by Divine command, to be consumed by Aaron and his two sons, each of the three priests must have devoured eighty-eight pigeons daily.

When, in addition to the pigeons, they were required to eat an ox or two apiece, we may respectfully object that, however capacious the stomachs of priests were in those days, our capacity for belief is not quite so large.

To record all the unhistoric statements in the Old Testament would require a volume almost as large as the holy book itself. I must be satisfied, therefore, to name a few events which, I think, fairly come under the above category.

Let me state here frankly that I do not think it is historically true that Jehovah, in a paroxysm of passion, begged Moses to "let me alone that my wrath may wax hot against them"—the Israelites—(Ex. xxxii. 10), or that Moses spoke to God "face to face as a man speaketh to his friend," or even that he was privileged to have a back view of deity (Ex. xxxiii. 11, 20-23).

In Numbers we come across the story of Balaam and the intelligent quadruped that saw an angel. It has been said that asses are the only creatures that ever have seen an angel; but Balaam's ass not only saw an angel, but admonished a prophet. If the historian who contributed this enlivening episode to the book of Numbers had but enlightened us on one or two points, we might, like Agrippa, have been "almost persuaded" to believe it. For example, he might have told us in what language or dialect the ass spoke, at what school he acquired it, and what professor taught him. In the absence of such details I feel bound to pronounce this story as unhistoric, though I dare declare that I have myself heard many a theological ass speak. The story of Balaam is merely ridiculous; but the contents of the thirty-first chapter of Numbers are ghastly. It would ill fare with human-kind if the directions therein given for the prosecution of war were really revelations of the Divine will and character.

Of Joshua I need only say that, when he called upon

the sun to stand still, he did what Owen Glendower might have done with as good a result.

It is not historically true that Samson slew a thousand people with the jawbone of an ass. The revised version makes Samson recount his exploit in verse (Judges xv. 16). It was, perhaps, his poetical jawbone that overcame the multitude. It was, possibly, also in a poetical and figurative sense that Samson at his death pulled down the house upon the heads of the Philistines. Samson "brought down the house" in the same way as the actor—with laughter or applause; nothing more.

As to how much, or how little, of such books as Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles is literally true, it is impossible to tell; but it will be obvious, after a careful perusal of them, that they are largely leavened with the fabulous. Such dramatic and poetical writings as Job, Isaiah, and Proverbs will be dealt with hereafter. There is little to be said in reference to their historical value. But, in the light of evolution, the whole of these books or pamphlets, and others which are comprised within the covers of the Bible, have, like the sacred books of other nations, great value to the seeker after truth.

The book of Genesis is a puerile production if compared with the scientific and historical works of to-day. Taken as revelations from God, Exodus is full of fictions and follies. Joshua and Judges are ludicrous and barbarous. But, if these productions are regarded, as they should be by all sensible men, as earnest guesses after truth by our early ancestors, they contain for us much that is valuable, much that is bright and even beautiful. They contain, indeed, the stepping-stones to knowledge upon which philosophers and scientists in subsequent ages planted their feet, and which helped to those notable successes which have done so much to brighten the lives and enrich the minds of mankind in their struggling pilgrimage through the world.

BIBLE MORALITY.

Polygamy Sanctioned—Hebrew Slavery—Belief in Witchcraft—New Testament Morality an Advance upon that of the Old Testament, but Still Imperfect—The Golden Rule—The Sermon on the Mount Criticised—Self-mutilation—Abandonment of Home—The Curse on Unbelievers—Modern Christians Refuse to Obey Jesus.

WITH its false science, its inaccurate history, its wonderful and incredible stories, laid bare, one would be disposed to say that such an indictment was strong enough without going further to demonstrate conclusively the human origin of the Bible. But we will proceed one stage further, and make an examination into the morality of the Bible. What shall we find? We shall find that, on the assumption that the Bible is God's word, the moral difficulties are a thousandfold more difficult of explanation than all the scientific and historical ones put together. We have a God who sanctions and gives encouragement to the most horrible of crimes; who promotes wars against inoffensive and defenceless peoples; who favours slavery, smiles approval upon polygamy, and connives at atrocities the most abhorrent and revolting that we have any record of in the history of the world. Let us look at these charges more closely, and state the evidence upon which they rest.

Polygamy.—Throughout the Pentateuch the institution

of polygamy is not only sanctioned, but is regarded as consistent with the highest virtue. For instance, Abraham had a wife and several concubines, and the latter were regarded in the light of "goods and chattels." Soon after Sarai had given birth to Isaac she appears to have had a difference with her husband concerning Hagar, "a bondwoman," and her child Ishmael; and the result of this domestic scene was that Abraham turned Hagar, who was as much his wife as Sarai, and this boy, who was really his own child, adrift into the wilderness to die; in which conduct we find that Jahveh not only acquiesced, but gave it his distinct approval. The great patriarchs were polygamists, and the writers of the Old Testament appear to have agreed that this was an inspired institution. Now, can it be possible that an infinite and all-wise ruler of the universe was ever in favour of polygamy? Can it be possible that he ever regarded this as the purest method for the propagation of the human species? Even on scientific grounds he ought to have known that such an institution was destructive of the races that adopted it. On the ground of purity he ought to have vigorously opposed it. But he did not. Why? Because the Jews were in favour of it; and the Jews accepted it as an institution simply because they found other races practised it before them.

Slavery.—Jahveh was in favour of slavery. If he did not originate this institution, he certainly commanded the Jews to practise it towards alien races. Can there be any doubt of this? Let us see. In Lev. xxv. 44-46 we find: "Both thy bondmen, and thy bondmaids, which thou shalt have, shall be of the heathen that are round about you; of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids. Moreover, of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land: and they shall be your possession. And ye

shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession; they shall be your bondmen forever."

And again, in Ex. xxi. 2-6: "If thou buy a Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve; and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master have given him a wife, and she have born him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door-post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him forever."

Here is an ordinance of yet deeper dye: "If a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand, he shall be surely punished. Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished: for he is his money" (v. 20, 21).

To-day we revolt at this horrible teaching as much as the "very intelligent Christian native" who read the passage for the first time when he was assisting the late Bishop Colenso to translate the Bible into the Zulu tongue. But here we have the inspired word just as it was written by specially-selected amanuenses; and there can be no doubt that Jahveh at one time was in favour of slavery. But why did he sanction this barbarous and brutal institution? Because the Jews were in favour of it. The Pentateuch was written by Jews, and merely expresses the opinions then current among the Hebrews; nothing more.

Witchcraft.—That Jahveh believed in witchcraft, if he believed in anything at all, is clear enough from the following passage in Ex. xxii. 18: "Thou shalt not

suffer a witch to live." Under this injunction thousands of poor creatures have been subjected to the most horrible treatment, nearly a hundred thousand being put to death as witches in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Germany alone, not to mention the thousands in England and Scotland during the same period who were either burnt at the stake or drowned for the same alleged offence.

We have seen that the morality of the Pentateuch and of the other Hebrew writings comprised within the pages of the Old Testament is of a very low order, embracing as it does such horrible and degrading teachings as the physical and intellectual enslavement of one portion of the community for the special benefit of the other, aggressive warfare upon inoffensive and defenceless peoples, polygamy, belief in witchcraft, and a number of other absurdities and barbarities which need only be mentioned to be condemned. On the assumption that man is an animal who has, by a gradual and painful process, evolved out of barbarism by adjusting himself to the ever-changing conditions of life, it is not difficult to understand how in one age a set of actions would be regarded as moral which in another age would be considered highly immoral; how slavery would be a perfectly natural condition of things in a society composed almost exclusively of savages; and how superior races could hope to survive in the struggle only by conquering and putting into subjection inferior peoples. This mode of explanation, however, the Christian prohibits us from adopting, alleging that his Bible contains the highest conceivable morality; a morality proceeding from the highest source, the fountain of all truth in word and deed—in short, that the Bible contains the "beginning and end of all wisdom," and any attempt to improve upon it must end in disastrous failure. Now, if we turn from the Old to the New Testament, we shall find a

distinct improvement in the character of the teaching; for, amid much that is incongruous, incredible, absurd, and unnatural, we shall find principles enunciated of a loftier, more humane, and more useful character than anything to be found in the earlier Hebrew writings. Not that we shall find a perfect code of morals in the teachings of the carpenter of Nazareth. The Free-thinker does not expect perfection in anything. Perfection to him is but a relative term. One thing may be more perfect than another; but absolute perfection is inconceivable. The Christian, however, is bound to believe that the doctrines of Christ are in every respect faultless; that in no stage of the world's progress can they be improved upon. To this declaration the Free-thinker gives an emphatic denial.

What are the distinctive moral teachings of Jesus? Without a doubt many of the most important teachings attributed to Jesus, and some of the best among them, can be traced back to a period long anterior to the alleged birth of Christ. The Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would they should do unto you," was taught by Confucius hundreds of years before Jesus commenced his mission among the Jews—assuming for the nonce that the Jesus of the Gospels is an historical personage about whose existence there can be no manner of doubt. Many doctrines attributed to Jesus are also attributed to Zoroaster and Buddha, both of whom lived before him.

The distinctive teachings of Jesus are not by any means new; but those of them which are most original appear also to be most harmful in their tendency. Some portion of the Sermon on the Mount may be regarded as very good sentiment, but, as moral teaching, quite impracticable in an age of civilisation and progress.

Now, the true value of a moral precept may be tested

by this principle: that it should be susceptible of being put into practice in every-day life not only without injury, but with positive benefit, to the community. Many of the doctrines of Jesus lack this essential quality. They may have been well adapted to such an age as that in which he is alleged to have lived, but they are quite unsuited to the present condition of society in all the civilised countries of the world.

Passive submission to insult and ill treatment cannot be regarded as good morality. To submit to insult or ill treatment when they can be resisted and prevented is a sign of weakness or folly. Such conduct gives the ruffian the power to ride rough-shod over his weaker brethren whenever opportunity allows. Yet Jesus said: "Ye have heard that it hath been said: An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain" (Matt. v. 38-41). If our ancestors had always adopted this course, we should be slaves to-day. If the honest man, when robbed and smitten by the thief, should turn the other cheek, or offer his cloak when his coat had been taken, he would be positively promoting rascality.

Jesus gave utterance to a number of other very unreasonable doctrines. For example, "Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (Luke vi. 20). When was it blessed to be poor? Not during the nineteenth century, certainly. It is extremely doubtful if poverty is ever a blessing; and "poverty of spirit," which Jesus also advised, is a decided curse.

"Blessed are ye that hunger now, for ye shall be filled" (Luke vi. 21). When? In the next world, when they will have no stomachs to fill. That is a little too

late; those who starve in this world are not likely to get a place at the festive board in the next.

"But woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep. Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets. But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you. Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke, forbid him not to take thy coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee, and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again" (Luke vi. 24-30). What would be the effect of this morality if put into practice in every-day life? Would it not destroy the foundation upon which all society rests? How is it possible to love our enemies? It is difficult at times to love one's friends; but our enemies—how can we love them while we know them to be our enemies? Jesus either did not understand human nature with a "wise and learned spirit," or he has been misrepresented or misunderstood by his biographers and followers.

Equally mischievous is the following teaching: "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink: nor yet for your body what ye shall put on. Behold the fowls of the air," etc. (Matt. vi. 25).

The poor man who takes no thought for the morrow in modern times soon finds himself an inmate either of the workhouse or of the gaol. Indeed, the civilised man is distinguished from the uncivilised in this: that while the latter is content when he has obtained food enough to satisfy his immediate wants, the former looks ahead and makes provision for months or even years.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth,

where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal" (Matt. vi. 19). With banks, insurance companies, and provident societies by the score in our midst, how is it possible for Christians to say they practise the above teaching? Moreover, wealthy Christians should always remember that "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Matt. xix. 24). Many of them by their conduct seem to say that they will venture the risk; or, at worst, that "a bird in the hand is worth two in a bush."

Jesus also taught self-mutilation. "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell." And the same with regard to hands and feet (Matt. xviii. 8, 9). This doctrine is practised at times by madmen or religious enthusiasts even to-day; but it was very frequently practised in the Dark Ages. He also expressed his approval of those who "made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake" (Matt. xix. 12). A sect in Russia, known as the Skopski, practise this form of mutilation as a Divine injunction.

Jesus outraged all the tender feelings of humanity when he declared that "everyone that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matt. xix. 29). When to these we add the doctrine of "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark xvi. 16), we have put into a small compass the distinctive moral teachings of Jesus. No teaching that I have any knowledge of has been so productive of evil as this last. By making belief a virtue and unbelief a vice, it has been the main-spring of persecution for hundreds of years. It has

strangled science and thwarted progress. Christians who unfeignedly believe in this doctrine persecute wherever they have the power.

The general doctrines of Christianity have undergone many changes, and in some cases and among some sects little except the name survives. Christianity, like all other religions, has been powerless to resist the ceaseless tendency in nature and in man to change. In practice, Christianity to-day is the very antithesis of what it was in the time of Jesus. Christians strive hard to get rich, despite the denunciation of their master. They appeal to the police for assistance when they are smitten, and often before they get the blow. They never part with their cloak when their coat is taken. They hate their enemies as vigorously as any pagan; and they lay up their treasures on earth, and often cheat other people out of theirs, as though they did not believe in another world from which all thieves (except David) will be unceremoniously excluded.

How is this? It is because human thought has grown; because science has increased; because men think more and believe less; because men have found that the moral doctrines of Jesus meant moral suicide; because the affairs of this world engage their attention, instead of the affairs of the next—in a word, because, in the evolution of things, so-called Christianity has changed into Rationalism, while still retaining the old name. The evolutionary process affects all things. It is a law of our being that we must grow, must evolve, or decay.

The doctrines of Jesus to-day are regarded as impracticable, for we have outgrown them; and their preservation in religious literature serves only to mark the progress we have made.

CHAPTER VII.

BIBLE MIRACLES.

Eve and the Serpent—The Flood—Elijah's Fiery Chariot—The Shunammite's Son—Miracles Worked by Jesus—Devils or Fits?—Jesus Compared with Miranda—Healing the Blind—Agnes Rollo Wilkie and the Baskets of Wisdom—Lazarus—The Book of the Acts.

SOME of the Bible miracles are great conceptions, such as the creation of the world and the production of organic beings at the command of Jahveh; but others are extremely small, such as the story of Jonah's lying for three days and three nights in the stomach of a big fish. Others are stupid; some are serious, but horrible. A few would have been useful if true; while many are unworthy of a clever prestidigitator. It is now generally admitted that there is a perceptible evolution in the ideas of the Bible writers as to what a real miracle ought to be. And ultimately even miracles have to be brought to the touchstone of common sense and utility. But let us glance for a while at the miracles of the Bible, and see what they are.

The writer of the third chapter of Genesis, for example, thought there was nothing very remarkable in a "subtile" animal like the serpent carrying on a conversation with a lady, though the writer does not say who gave the serpent an introduction to Eve, or whether he opened the conversation in the customary way of "Good evening, Madam. Fine day, is it not?" or in what language or dialect he spoke. The old Hebrew fabulist's inventive resource fell far below the rich fancy of

Milton, who thus depicts the opening of the interview :—

“ Oft he bowed
His turret crest, and sleek enamelled neck,
Fawning, and licked the ground whereon she trod.
His gentle dumb expression turned at length
The eyes of Eve to mark his play ; he, glad
Of her attention gained, with serpent tongue
Organic, or impulse of vocal air,
His fraudulent temptation thus began :
‘ Wonder not, sovereign mistress,’ etc.

After the “fall of man” the first miracle recorded is the Deluge, which has always appeared to me in the light of one of the most atrocious of human conceptions. If it were not a mere human idea, but an awful reality, wrought by an infinitely good and powerful deity, then it was all the more infamous—indeed, inexpressibly horrible alike in purpose and execution.

The professed object of the Deluge was to clear the earth of all the wicked people upon it. The Flood did more than this. It destroyed helpless and innocent children as well as inoffensive and guiltless animals. And when this was done the end for which the Flood was designed was not accomplished. Noah and his family, with the germs of inherent depravity within them, remained alive to transmit to their offspring the many bad as well as the few good qualities of their nature. Is it not incredible that a good God would adopt such a method to remove evil-doers from the earth ? If he were all-powerful, he could, had he chosen, have removed the evil from the people without destroying them ; and if his goodness had been equal to his power—that is, had he been infinitely good as well as infinitely powerful—he would have been impelled by his very nature to do it. Moreover, was he not to blame, in the first instance, for allowing evil to enter into the world ? Or, at all events, having allowed it, might he not have nipped it in the bud, without permitting it to increase in

such a fashion as to necessitate the destruction of all living beings, except one favoured family ?

But when we look at the idea of the Flood as a human conception, we see at once what absurd ideas of nature and of man the Biblical writer cherished. Wickedness was regarded by him as an entity that could only be annihilated with the destruction of the creature. It had no reference to the kind of organisation, the education, or to the environment of the individual. Not at all. These things did not count. The human heart was black, foul, and corrupt, and men’s thoughts were “evil continually ;” and the only conceivable remedy, to the mind of the writer, was the miraculous cold-water process, by which human beings were to be ruthlessly sacrificed. It does not appear to have occurred to the writer that God might have effected his purpose just as well—nay, better—had he performed a good miracle instead of a bad one, and converted the wicked people into good, wise, and just men and women. No ; Jahveh must do something appalling in its far-reaching consequences to demonstrate his power, else the Biblical scribe was not satisfied.

The miracles said to have been wrought by Moses and Aaron in Egypt are of a different order. They were performed like the tricks of the conjurer, and for no more moral purpose than to demonstrate to the incredulous and hard-hearted Pharaoh the wonderful power of Jahveh. Such alleged miracles as the sun and moon standing still, the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud moving in front of the Israelites, the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah, may have been only highly-coloured descriptions of phenomena which the writers believed to have taken place, and are not, therefore, to be critically considered in the light of supernatural events.

Passing by the books of Samuel as containing little of a strikingly miraculous character, I come next to such

miracles as the ascension of Elijah to heaven (2 Kings ii.) and the raising of the Shunammite's son to life by Elisha (2 Kings iv.).

Now, the first of these miracles implies that God suspended the law of gravitation, and allowed Elijah to make a rapid ascent to heaven. When it is remembered that the writer of the book of Kings had no idea of the immortality of the soul, one can understand his ardent desire to convey to his readers that a good man like Elijah did not die as ordinary mortals do. This may have been the reason that induced him to write an account of Elijah's translation by means of a "fiery chariot," with "horses of fire," into heaven. Heaven, to the writer, appeared to be located just above the clouds. Nobody to-day would seriously argue that God suspended, or rather violated, all the laws of nature in order to allow Elijah or any other man to take an excursion to heaven, not only because we have no evidence that a human being could live there if he safely arrived, but because the study of astronomy has placed any possible heaven in the skies at such an enormous distance from the earth that Elijah and his fiery chariot would probably not have reached their destination yet.

It is doubtful whether Elisha's alleged miracle of raising the Shunammite's son was a real miracle after all. At all events, he adopted perfectly natural means to bring about the desired effect. He did not call the child by name and say, "Arise! you that are dead—awake!" No; "he lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child, and the flesh of the child waxed warm; Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro, and went up and stretched himself upon him; and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes" (2 Kings iv. 34, 35). A quack doctor might

have gone through the same performance with the same result, if the child were not really dead, but only in a state of suspended animation. If the child, however, were actually dead—if the vital spark had gone out of the body, then it is difficult to understand how breathing into the dead child's mouth would have been anything more than a repulsive farce.

In both these cases the miracles were supposed to be accomplished for a good end, and, unlike those in the earlier books, did not bring wholesale destruction in their train. The miracles recorded in the book of Daniel, and again in Jonah, are of a puerile character, wrought for the sole purpose of showing that the God of Daniel and the God of Jonah was a mighty being, whose wonderful performances should inspire fear, even if they could not command respect.

In the Pentateuch, then, we have a record of miracles of a wholly useless, and in many cases of a very destructive, character. But in the later books—we do not, of course, include the book of Job or other admittedly more ancient productions than the Pentateuch—the character of the miracles undergoes a slight change, until we find that in almost every case, though the method was dubious, the object for which the miracles were supposed to have been wrought was decidedly good.

Turn now to the miracles of the New Testament, and, without inquiring too critically as to their credibility, let us see what was their value when tested by their utility.

The alleged miracles of Jesus are fairly numerous. The aim and motive of most of them were clearly beneficent; but the utilitarian or moral value of some is extremely questionable. Jesus may be applauded for curing a man of leprosy, for healing the centurion's servant, or even for "removing" the fever from Peter's mother-in-law. But, if Jesus were God, it is difficult to

understand why such persons should be afflicted with these diseases at all, especially if their conduct was meritorious; and, if such diseases were sent as a punishment, it is equally hard to understand why Jesus should select these among so many for cure, and leave all other afflicted persons to deal with the diseases by natural methods or perish. These were undoubtedly useful miracles if they occurred; but, as no amount of evidence would prove them to have been performed by supernatural means—no man being able to set a limit to nature's capabilities—we are open either to believe that those who recorded these events were mistaken or deceived, or that they were accomplished in a purely natural way.

Jesus is said to have turned devils out of demoniacs. But what are devils? Theologians do not know. They profess to know something about a personal being whom they describe by this name; but devils in the plural they know nothing about. Some say that the devils referred to were "fits." But fits are not entities; they are a physical condition resulting from a derangement of the nervous system.

The first three gospels relate how a legion of devils were transferred from a human subject to the bodies of some poor pigs, whose constitutions were so disturbed by extraordinary and unexpected internal sensations that they, with one accord, made an end to their existence by rushing furiously down a steep place into the sea. Now, granting that it was a good thing to turn devils out of the man, how can it be regarded as a moral act to give them a temporary lodging in the unoffending pigs? And if these devils were "fits," is it possible to transfer the fits of a man to pigs?

It is said that Jesus "stilled the tempest." But, though this would be in itself a meritorious performance, there were very few lives at stake. And if it was a good thing for Jesus to still the tempest to save a few disciples, it

is not unnatural to ask if it would not be still more praiseworthy on his part to calm the fury of the waves when some great vessel heavily laden with human beings was about to be engulfed? In presence of such a heart-moving spectacle, should we not all feel with Miranda:—

"If by your art, my dearest father, you have
Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them;
The sky, it seems, would pour down stinking pitch,
But that the sea, mounting to the welkin's cheek,
Dashes the fire out. O, I have suffered
With those that I saw suffer! A brave vessel,
Who had no doubt some noble creatures in her,
Dashed all to pieces. O, the cry did knock
Against my very heart! Poor souls, they perished!
Had I been any god of power, I would
Have sunk the sea within the earth, or e'er
It should the good ship so have swallowed, and
The freighting souls within her?"

Now, if Jesus, as a God, wished to demonstrate his power over the winds and the waves, surely he might have selected an opportunity when more lives were at stake than those of a few favoured apostles. When the *London* went down, heavily laden with young and hopeful emigrants, or when the *Princess Alice* was cut in twain by a massive iron vessel—on such occasions as these a big miracle would have been of undoubted utility. But when miracles are most needed, then are they most conspicuous by their absence.

Jesus is said to have opened the eyes of the blind. A useful miracle, undoubtedly, if it were ever performed. With no more difficult surgical operation than daubing some clay upon the sightless eyes, and calling upon the man to see, Jesus is alleged to have wrought this change (John ix.). Jesus did not give the man new eyes, nor supply any deficiency in "the aqueous or vitreous humours." No. He went through various eccentric ceremonies with some soft clay, called upon the man to receive his

sight, "and it was so." The Gospel narrative, however, itself throws grave doubt upon the genuineness of this miracle; for it goes on to declare that Jesus adjured the man to on no account divulge to any man the secret of how his sight had been restored. Imagine a surgeon who, having performed a successful operation, should implore his patient to tell no man, lest his practice should increase beyond his power to cope with it! If Jesus could restore the vision of one blind man, why not of a thousand? Or, indeed, why not of all? And, if it was a moral act to cure one, would it not be more moral to cure all? It will ever appear strange to the thoughtful that, in a world governed by a good, just, and almighty being, there should be any blind persons at all. Why should a God make organs that are useless? Upon the theological hypothesis, there can be no rational answer to this question.

Two other miracles may close our survey of Jesus Christ's thaumaturgic record. The first was the miracle of feeding five thousand hungry persons on five loaves and two fishes—a very useful miracle of its kind (Mark vi. 34-44)—and the alleged raising of Lazarus to life (John xi.).

In the feeding of five thousand we are told that they sat down in hundreds and fifties, and that, when Jesus "had looked up to heaven, and blessed and brake the loaves, he gave them to his disciples to set before them." Now, whether the loaves expanded before leaving the hands of Jesus, or after, the writer of Mark does not say. But, if neither the loaves nor the fishes were increased in size, we must assume either that they were of enormous dimensions at the start, or that the people could not have received more than a crumb of bread apiece, and a bit of fish of such infinitesimal proportions as to require the aid of the most powerful microscope in order that they might grasp it. In my debate with the Scotch

novelist, Agnes Rollo Wilkie ("Was Jesus an Impostor?"), my gifted antagonist suggested an explanation which she imagined to be of a rational character. She affirmed, in her grandiloquent way, that Jesus did not feed the five thousand on five loaves and two fishes. Certainly not. He supplied them with something far better than that; for he "fed them with the imperishable bread of wisdom and truth." But Mrs. Wilkie did not say whether the twelve baskets of fragments which were taken up after the feast were of the same unsubstantial character. Feeding five thousand hungry people is, without a doubt, a benevolent act. But feeding thousands of people who probably had food enough at home, and who could easily obtain it if they chose, is scarcely so useful as supplying those who, in time of famine, are entirely destitute of the means of existence.

The resurrection of Lazarus is regarded by Christians as the very best example of the great love of Jesus for his friend and compassion for the bereaved sisters, Martha and Mary. Looked at with the clear eye of reason, the alleged event bears a very different complexion. Jesus knew that Lazarus was going to die, yet he went away and did not return until Lazarus had been dead some days. Then, although he knew he could raise him from the dead, he came down to the grave-side and wept. Why these tears? Was Jesus sincere, or was his grief but a theatrical affectation? Then Jesus called Lazarus from the grave with a "loud voice." Presumably, the dead take no heed of soft voices. Jesus bade him "Come forth." Although Lazarus was "bound hand and foot with graveclothes," he managed to dexterously wriggle out of the grave. It may have been gratifying to Martha and Mary to have their brother restored to them. It may have excited wonder and admiration in the crowd who are alleged to have witnessed the event; but it certainly was ill-considered

kindness to poor Lazarus, who, instead of at once taking rank among the immortals, was recalled from the "valley of the shadow" only ere long to fall again "sick unto death" and re-enter the sepulchral cave.

The morality of such a miracle, viewed in this light, is very questionable. Neither does the resurrection of Lazarus seem to have had any perceptible effect on the people. It converted none, and Lazarus took no steps to evince the genuineness of the miracle by going among the people and proclaiming the wonder that had been performed upon him.

The alleged resurrection of Jesus is a miracle into the utility of which we need not inquire, since, if Jesus were God, he could not die, and, if he were a man, he could not raise himself from the dead.

Before summing up, we will throw a cursory glance at the book of the Acts of the Apostles. The account of St. Peter's so-called miraculous deliverance from prison by the aid of an angel is susceptible of more than one interpretation. If the event actually happened, it was undoubtedly a very fortunate occurrence for Peter; but, unless Peter or the angel wrote the Acts, we have not their word for it, and it may have been that Peter made his escape from prison, or was released, without the aid of an angel, or, indeed, without any supernatural assistance. In the fourteenth chapter we read that St. Paul practised what, in these days, would be called the art of "faith-healing." He is said to have healed a man who was a cripple from his birth. All he did was to say to the man in a loud voice, "Stand upright on thy feet." And the man leaped and walked. Perhaps he was not used to being shouted at. It was a good miracle if it occurred; but it would have seemed more satisfactory if St. Paul had operated on a one-legged man and miraculously supplied him with a fresh limb. A little further on St. Paul is alleged to have restored a

young man named Eutychus to life. It appears that, while Paul was delivering an eloquent discourse, Eutychus became so interested that he fell into a deep sleep—a not unnatural thing to do when listening to a dreary sermon—and "fell down from the third loft and was taken up dead." But Paul went down and fell on him, and said to the alarmed bystanders: "Trouble not yourselves, for his life is in him." Now, if the young man were really dead, it was surely a little perversion of the truth for St. Paul to say that "his life was in him;" and, if "his life was in him," then there was no miracle performed by St. Paul, and his falling upon the young man would not tend to his recovery.

We have seen that the miracles of Jesus were mainly of a useful character, supposing they were performed; for, with the exception of the useless cursing of the fig-tree and the swine episode, the rest of the wonders said to have been wrought by the Nazarene were performed for distinctly desirable purposes, the consummation of which meant the increase of human happiness. But whether we are dealing with the miracles recorded in the Old or in the New Testament, whether with the wonders performed by Jahveh or Jesus, or by less prominent "instruments," such as Moses, Joshua, Samson, or Paul, there is one fatal error running through them all. They all assume that the laws of nature are variable; that they may be changed, varied, or broken at the mere fiat of the deity—a purely gratuitous assumption, to which human experience, common sense, and, above all, the great doctrine of Evolution, are utterly opposed. The study of the Evolution doctrine demonstrates that all the phenomena of nature are natural; that effects follow causes in a never-ending succession; that natural forces go straight to their end, mowing down whoever or whatever happens to be in the way with perfect impartiality; and that, if miracles had ever

happened, or were ever likely to happen, man would be the most miserable of all beings—the sport and toy of nature, or of any being that happened to be behind natural forces. For, unless the laws of nature were fixed and unalterable, he would be powerless to calculate for a single instant the course of events in the world about him. Unable to pursue his daily avocation, he would from day to day cower in abject fear, awaiting the fatal force that would deprive him of existence.

CHAPTER VIII.

MIRACLES INCREDIBLE.

Miracles Never Attested by Trustworthy Evidence—The Testimony of the Gospel Writers—Why Rejected—Miracles Violate the Laws of Nature—Büchner on the Universality of Law—Hume on Miracles—Walt Whitman—Miracles Opposed to Evolution.

CONCERNING the subject of miracles in general, we may lay down these propositions :—

1. That they have never been attested by trustworthy evidence.
2. That the performance of them would be a violation of those uniform human experiences and observations from which have been deduced all the known laws of nature.
3. That they are opposed to the great doctrine of Evolution.

We will take these points one by one.

1. No alleged miracle has been attested by sound or trustworthy evidence. The Old Testament miracles are not recorded by eye-witnesses ; and even if they were, unless we knew what sort of persons the writers were—whether they were wise or foolish, credulous or careful in the examination of evidence—we could not determine the exact degree of credibility to be attached to their statements.

That Moses was not the author of the Pentateuch is now regarded, by all who are capable of forming a just judgment on the matter, as beyond all doubt. It is equally certain that two or more writers contributed

towards the production of the first five books of the Bible, and from the character of their writings we are entitled to say that they were unable to discriminate between the petty tricks of a conjurer and the majestic phenomena of the universe. Of the other writers we may remark that they were either self-deceived, or so credulous that they believed everything they were told concerning extraordinary events that were said to have happened at the time of which they wrote.

Nor can it be said that the alleged miracles of the New Testament are properly attested. Such evidence as is offered for them would be rejected by any magistrate as altogether inadequate. The question then is, What evidence is required to establish the truth of such extraordinary events? In the first place, we need the evidence of eye-witnesses; in the second place, we require the evidence of individuals who were not likely to be deceived; and, thirdly, we want the evidence of persons who were not interested in telling a falsehood to maintain some theory which they believed to be true. In no case have we got such witnesses. Firstly, the alleged writers of the Gospels do not pretend that they witnessed the performance of the miracles; secondly, they do not state their testimony with the judicial precision and orderly marshalling of facts and evidences which would entitle them to be considered as competent witnesses; and, thirdly, living in an age and generation to whom miracles were the commonplaces of belief, they must be regarded as highly prejudiced in favour of the supernatural occurrences they recount.

2. The performances of miracles would be a violation of human experience and of the laws of nature. By laws of nature are not meant some Divine commands which are rigidly carried out in the operations of natural forces, but merely the observed order of phenomena. Human experience gives the best warrant for the belief

that nature's laws are uniform in their mode of operation; that each and every event is preceded by some other event without which it could not happen, and with which it is bound to happen; or, in other words, that the phenomena of nature consist of one long chain of causes and effects, which is practically endless. Now, it must be perfectly obvious to any rational creature that, if this be true, miracles cannot happen, for the happening of a miracle would be the disturbance of the whole order of phenomena; and, since all events are the necessary consequence of previous events through all time, the performance of a miracle would involve the undoing of this endless series of phenomena. Feuerbach well expresses it when he says: "Who suspends one law of nature suspends them all."

The study of astronomy and natural philosophy affords us ample proof that the same laws which govern the earth on which we live also govern the stars and other heavenly bodies. Professor Büchner says: "The laws of gravitation—*i.e.*, the laws of motion and attraction—are, in all space reached by the telescope, invariably the same. The motions of all the most remote bodies take place according to the same laws by which on our earth a stone falls, or the pendulum vibrates, etc. All astronomical calculations regarding the motions of distant bodies, and which are based upon these known laws, have proved perfectly correct. Astronomers have pointed out the existence of stars which were only discovered after being sought for in the spots indicated; they predict solar and lunar eclipses, and calculate the re-appearance of comets in centuries to come. The form of Jupiter was deduced from the laws of rotation and was verified by direct observation. We know that the planets have their seasons, days, and nights, like the earth, though they differ in length."

* "Force and Matter."

The learned writer then carries his illustration into other departments of physical science. He says: "The laws of light through all space are the same as on our earth. Everywhere has it the same velocity and composition, and its refraction takes place in a similar manner. The light which the most remote fixed stars transmit to us through a space of billions of miles differs in nothing from the light of our sun; it acts according to the same laws, and has the same composition. We possess not less sufficient grounds proving that the bodies in the universe possess two of the same properties as our earth and the objects upon it—namely, impenetrability and divisibility. The laws of heat are like those of light—everywhere the same. The heat emanating from the sun acts according to the same principles as that radiating from the earth. But it is upon the relation of heat that the solid, liquid, and æriform states of bodies depend; these states must, therefore, everywhere exist under the same conditions. Again, electricity, magnetism, etc., are so intimately connected with the evolution of heat that they cannot be separated; consequently, wherever heat is—that is to say, everywhere—there must also be these forces. The same may be asserted of the relation of heat to the mode of chemical combination and decomposition, which must everywhere take place in a similar manner. Meteoric stones—visible messengers from another world—afford a more direct proof. In these remarkable bodies, which are projected from other heavenly bodies, or from the primordial ether, there has as yet no element been discovered which is not already existing upon the earth, nor is the form of those crystals different from those known to us. The history of the origin and development of our earth is analogous to that of other heavenly bodies. The spheroidal forms of the planets prove that they, like the earth, were once in a fluid state; and the gradual development of

the earth to its present form must, in similar manner, have taken place in all other planets."

In the foregoing passages Dr. Büchner has admirably demonstrated the universality of the laws which regulate all bodies in the universe. It is perfectly clear that, if the laws of nature were not immutable, man could not calculate with any certainty upon the happening of any single event; all the forces happening haphazard, or having no inherent qualities of attraction or repulsion, would cause irreparable confusion. It follows consequently, from the universality of the laws of nature, that the performance of a miracle would mean the suspension of all these laws and the production of universal chaos.

David Hume years ago laid it down that we may accept it as a general maxim "that no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle unless the testimony be of such a kind that its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it endeavours to establish, and even in that case there is a mutual destruction of arguments, and the superior only gives us an assurance suitable to that degree of force which remains after deducting the inferior. When anyone," he adds, "tells me that he saw a dead man restored to life I immediately consider with myself whether it would be more probable that this person should either deceive or be deceived, or that the fact which he relates should really have happened. I weigh the one miracle against the other, and according to the superiority which I discover I pronounce my decision, and always reject the greater miracle. If the falsehood of his testimony would be more miraculous than the event which he relates, then, and not till then, can he pretend to command my belief or opinion."

Sometimes the discussion of this question of the happening of miracles is rendered exceedingly confusing by the employment of the word "miracle" in a different

sense altogether from that which we are now considering. In one sense, as Thomas Paine points out, everything in nature is a miracle—that is to say, its very existence is wonderful and strange to man. Walt Whitman says:—

“Why! Who makes much of a miracle?
As to me, I know nothing else but miracles.
To me every hour of the light and dark is a miracle;
Every cubic inch of space is a miracle;
Every square yard of the surface of the earth is spread with the same;
Every cubic foot of the interior swarms with the same;
Every spear of grass—the frames, limbs, organs of men and women and all that concerns them—
All these to me are unmistakably perfect miracles.
To me the sea is a continual miracle—
The fishes that swim, the rocks, the motion of the waves, the ships with men in them—
What stranger miracles are there?”

But it is quite clear that the poet is not using the word “miracle” in the sense of a marvellous and supernatural event.

Raising dead people to life, feeding thousands on five loaves and two fishes, walking on the surface of the sea, opening the eyes of the blind, ascending into heaven through the clouds—these and like events are occurrences which are not in harmony with nature’s every-day performances, which contradict human experience, and which, if we are expected to believe them, would require the most conclusive kind of evidence to substantiate. If a man said that he saw another raised from the dead to-day, who would believe him? No one. If he affirmed that he himself was so raised, we should probably get a strait-waistcoat for him. But if he declared that somebody saw a miracle happen hundreds of years ago, when there was no printing-press, when the masses were ignorant and credulous, when every event that was not understood was regarded as miraculous, Christians would

say, “We believe it.” But if he went on to allege that the said miracle was performed by Mohammed, they would smile and say, “Mohammed! Oh, he was an impostor!” Each religionist denies the miracles of the other; each affirms the other’s to have been “mere jugglery;” and the Rationalist denies them all.

3. With the truth of the doctrine of Evolution firmly impressed upon his mind, with a clear understanding of the oneness of Nature, in spite of her multifarious manifestations, the Rationalist is fortified against delusions of every kind. He knows that in the realm of the Cosmos each event forms a link in an endless chain of causes and effects. Nothing absolutely begins in nature, and nothing ends; all is change—a ceaseless unfolding of events, an endless transformation of the one eternal substance. In the Cosmos everything is natural. The word “supernatural” in the past has always been the term by which man has separated the known from the unknown, and with the ever-accumulating force of the human intellect the unknown will more and more give way to the known, until the term “supernatural” will remain only as the veil which language throws over the unknowable and unthinkable origin of the universe.

“Evolution,” it has been beautifully said,* “is not at variance with religion;† in its highest sense it is a religion in itself. The Evolutionist is humble in the presence of Nature; she represents the last phase of the great First Cause. Others may scoff at her, the child of their God; he loves her, for she is his companion, his mother, and his nurse; she ministers to his pleasures, yet she works for his advancement; awake, he studies her, for she is the mine of his learning; asleep, he dreams on the unseen working of her wondrous laws; he listens,

* E. A. Ridsdale, in “Cosmic Evolution.”

† The word “religion” is here used in its purely secular sense.

he sees, and ever he wonders; but he worships not, for he has no fear.....He cares but as an antiquarian for the book of the Jews. Nobler inducements has he to act righteously than the most learned and pious divine. If he sins, he knows well that the future will be tainted by the deeds he has done. He it is not that does right lest his soul should forever be lapt in noisome sulphurous flames; he shuns evil that he may leave behind him a purer and a nobler form, that he may hand down to posterity habits that advantage the race as a whole, that he may, however humble his sphere, contribute in some way to the happiness of the future race, and mitigate its inheritance of pain."

CHAPTER IX.

BIBLE POETRY.

Progress and Development of Poetry—Bible Poetry Reflects the Spirit of the Times—The Psalms—The Cursing Psalmist Compared with Portia—"A vengeful, pitiless, almighty fiend"—Job and Shakespeare on the Triumph of Justice—Choice Quotations from Psalms and Proverbs—The Voluptuous Song—Superiority of "Profane" Poetry—Shakespeare—Keats—Pope—Shelley—Lowell—The Chain of Development.

As long as human beings have been able to express their deepest feelings in articulate and rhythmical language there have been poets in the world. But poetry, like all other fine arts, is a development. At first, it is simplicity itself; but, with the varied experience of mankind, it grows and changes, until, as a complex and complete whole, it captivates the head and enthalls the heart of humanity. The painter appeals to our sense of beauty in colour, the sculptor to our idea of the beautiful in form, the musician to the same sense in sound; while the poet uses all the arts of fancy and language to arouse in us a recognition of the beautiful in sentiment. Now, the aim of all art is to give pleasure, not necessarily to impart truth. The poet can do no more than express his own physical and mental states, and, therefore, poetry can be only the mirror of natural phenomena and of imaginary creations, as they appear to the mind of the writer. The wider and loftier his knowledge of nature and his faculty of imagination, the greater is the

pleasure he experiences and imparts. Works of art have this advantage over many things which afford us temporary pleasure—such as money, rank, health, sensual enjoyments, etc., that they remain behind to be enjoyed by thousands who know nothing of their authors, but who may understand and appreciate their gifts long after their eyes have ceased to roll in “fine frenzy.”

It would be manifestly absurd for any man to affirm that the Bible contains no poetry, because every reader must know that poetic expressions are scattered throughout the pages of this so-called sacred book. Every diligent student would go so far as to admit that some excellent poetry may be found in such books as Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Isaiah, and several of the minor prophets.

The contention of the evolutionist, however, is this—that whatever poetry is found in the Bible is perfectly human, and often of a very faulty character, both in expression and sentiment, even after it has been improved by successive generations of revisers. For what man with a grain of sense can believe that the translations which we now have of the Old Testament represent exactly the ideas of the ancient writers? Even the plays of Shakespeare have undergone frequent revision to bring certain expressions contained in them more in unison with modern ideas. Shakespeare made his characters speak prevailing opinions. It would have been folly for him to have done otherwise, although it is quite certain that the poet himself dissented from many of the views to which his characters gave expression. The same, however, cannot be said of the Bible poets. All the sentiments, whether good or bad, which they committed to writing must be regarded as their own, except in the case of various passages in the poetic symposium contained in the book of Job. And yet the sentiments were more than their own. The voice was

the voice of man; the emotions and language were the emotions and language of man; but the motive power and inspiration were of God. God used alike their sombre moods and joyous moods to reach the depths of the human soul. So we are told. But, even allowing this theory to be reasonable, ought we to expect the inspired poet to breathe the spirit of revenge? It is well enough for David to exclaim: “Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever.....Who giveth food to all flesh, for his mercy endureth forever” (Psalm cxxxvi. 1, 25). But the poet shows a bigoted and cruel spirit when describing persons whom he calls Jahveh’s enemies. He says: “Set thou a wicked man over him, and let Satan stand at the right hand. When he shall be judged let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin. Let his days become few; and let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg: let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places. Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let the strangers spoil his labour. Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children. Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their name be blotted out. Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the Lord; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out” (Psalm cix. 6-14).

These are the expressions of an inspired poet! How different these revengeful lines from Portia’s eulogy of mercy in “The Merchant of Venice”:—

“The quality of mercy is not strained;
It droppeth, as the gentle rain from heaven,
Upon the place beneath; it is twice blessed:
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:
’Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes

The throned monarch better than his crown :
 His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
 The attribute to awe and majesty,
 Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings ;
 But mercy is above this sceptered sway,
 It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
 It is an attribute to God himself ;
 And earthly power doth then show likest God's,
 When mercy seasons justice."

From the inspired Bible poet to the uninspired playwright, what an evolution !

We learn truth by contrast, and we are enabled to judge how far man has travelled along the line towards civilisation by reference to his thoughts, whether expressed in poesy or prose. A low idea of human nature, an intolerant spirit towards those from whom we differ, dogmatism on things doubtful, are signs of the small and uncultivated mind. Dryden says :—

"A tyrant's power in rigour is exprest."

And the harsh character of the Bible poet is shown in the cruelty and vindictiveness of his appeals to Deity to avenge himself by torturing his enemies.

If the poetry of the Bible were really God-inspired, we should expect not only to find it perfect in style, in expression, soaring to the loftiest heights and sounding the profoundest depths of philosophy—giving us, indeed, the noblest truths in the loveliest dress—it would be incomparably superior to the poems of profane writers. Such, however, we do not find to be the case. Of human nature the Bible poets understood very little ; of natural phenomena they knew even less. Consequently, they sang not the divine song of human liberty, nor did they extol the labours of the reformer, the struggles of a people striving to be free. But they sang the song of war, of strife, of passion, of hatred, of malice, and of murder. They sang of victories which their God had given them over their enemies, and composed hymns of

praise in honour of a God whom Shelley describes as—

"A vengeful, pitiless, and almighty fiend,
 Whose mercy is a nickname for the rage
 Of tameless tigers hungering for blood."

Take a few examples of the crude ideas of Deity which permeate the poetical parts of the so-called sacred volume : "The burden of Egypt. Behold the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt : and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it. And I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians : and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbour, city against city, and kingdom against kingdom" (Isaiah xix. 1, 2). We have here the idea set before us of a God who, being dissatisfied with the conduct of the Egyptians, resolves to "set every man against his brother, and every one against his neighbour," as the only method of vindicating the claim of eternal justice.

The unbeliever, of course, is to have a very unhappy time of it. Observe : "Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come forever and ever. That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord ; which say to the seers, See not ; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things ; speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits ; get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us. Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon : therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant. And he shall break it as the breaking of the potters' vessel that is broken in pieces ; he shall not spare : so that there shall not be

found in the bursting of it a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water withal out of the pit" (Isaiah xxx. 8-14).

The following is a poetic description of the manner in which God avengeth himself against the enemies of the Church: "Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein: the world, and all things that come forth of it. For the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcasses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood" (Isaiah xxxiv. 1-3). "Their land shall be soaked with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness. For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion. And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up forever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste: none shall pass through it forever and ever" (Isaiah xxxiv. 7-10).

There is a touch of a higher Theism in the following: "Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I, the Lord? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of

my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow and every tongue shall swear" (Isaiah xlv. 20-23). But, despite the vigour of this declaration, the Jahveh of the Old Testament was too little superior to the graven images denounced by the Decalogue; and the Christians who still see perfection in Jahveh have not advanced far beyond the worship of the wooden god.

Such examples as we have already given demonstrate beyond doubt the human qualities, not always of the highest character, of Biblical poetry. They show conclusively that the Bible verse-makers had low ideas of God and man, small ideas of nature, and no idea whatever of duty apart from obedience to a supposed Divine command. None of them sing the praises of virtue for virtue's sake. The sentiment of Socrates, that "a man who is good for anything ought not to calculate the chance of living or dying; he ought only to consider whether in doing anything he is doing right or wrong, acting the part of a good man or a bad," was quite beyond them. They were in favour of bad deeds, which, they supposed, were sanctioned by Deity; and good deeds, in their judgment, had no special value unless they were commanded by Jahveh. Still, it would be a gross misrepresentation of facts to say that there are no good sentiments poetically expressed by the contributors to the pages of the Bible; on the contrary, there are many, and we now proceed to give a few examples.

Job recognised that the world did not always appear to be governed upon just principles—that sometimes the innocent suffered for the guilty, and the wicked gloried in their sin. This is how he expresses it:—

"They are of those that rebel against the light; they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof.

"The murderer rising with the light killeth the poor and needy, and in the night is as a thief."

But Job did not think that the wicked went altogether unpunished. He felt sure that Nemesis awaited them :—

"For the morning is to them even as the shadow of death : if one know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death.

"He is swift as the waters ; their portion is cursed in the earth : he beholdeth not the way of the vineyards.

"Drought and heat consume the snow waters : so doth the grave those which have sinned.

"The womb shall forget him ; the worm shall feed sweetly on him ; he shall be no more remembered ; and wickedness shall be broken as a tree" (Job xxiv. 17-20).

Shakespeare said :—

"Murder, though it have no tongue,
Will speak with most miraculous organ."

And so indeed it does. But Job seems to think—and the sentiment does him credit—that even the undiscovered murderer does not go unpunished in this world, whether there be another or not.

David proclaims the highest principle for the regulation of conduct in the Theist's life when he says :—

"O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness : fear before him, all the earth.

"Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth : the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved : he shall judge the people righteously" (Psalm xvi. 9, 10).

For a cheerful song of praise take Psalm c. :—

"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands.

"Serve the Lord with gladness ; come before his presence with singing.

"Know ye that the Lord he is God : it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves ; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

"Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his

courts with praise : be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

"For the Lord is good ; his mercy is everlasting ; and his truth endureth to all generations."

And for daring metaphor we may select :—

"Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, thou art very great ; thou art clothed with honour and majesty.

"Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment : who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain.

"Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters : who maketh the clouds his chariot : who walketh upon the wings of the wind.

"Who maketh his angels spirits ; his ministers a flaming fire" (Psalm civ. 1-4).

The Proverbs also contain some good teachings felicitously expressed, and may be regarded as model prose poems. Here are a few :—

"Every prudent man dealeth with knowledge ; but a fool layeth open his folly.

"A wicked messenger falleth into mischief ; but a faithful ambassador is health.

"Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuseth instruction ; but he that regardeth reproof shall be honoured" (Prov. xiii. 16-18).

"Better is a dry morsel and quietness therewith than a house full of sacrifices with strife" (ibid, xvii. 1).

"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine ; but a broken spirit drieth the bones" (ibid, xvii. 22).

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging ; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (ibid, xx. 1).

"The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death" (ibid, xxi. 6).

"It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop than with a brawling woman in a wide house" (ibid, xxi. 9).

"A good name is rather to be chosen than great

riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold" (ibid, xxii. 1).

"The wicked flee when no man pursueth; but the righteous are bold as a lion" (ibid, xxviii. 1).

But for voluptuous imagery take the following passage from the Song of Solomon. The following lines are supposed to refer to the graces of the Church (!):—

"How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter! the joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman.

"Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanted not liquor; thy belly is like a heap of wheat set about with lilies.

"Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins" (Song of Solomon vii. 1-3).

Though there are many fine passages which we have not quoted, the above may be taken as fair samples of the variety of styles as well as diversity of sentiment in the poetry that pervades the pages of the Bible.

Our contention is that the poetry of the early books of the Bible is poor, both in conception and execution, as compared with that of the more recent books. And, further, that there is a distinct development—an undoubted evolution—in all the poetry of the Bible, no less than in poetical effusions of profane writers. True it is, no doubt, that one poet among many will stand out prominently at times by virtue of the largeness of his mind, of the loftiness of his sentiments, the nobility of his ideals, or by some special skill he possesses in the expression of his ideas. And, just as we may say that the writers of such books as Job, Proverbs, Psalms, etc.—the authorship in each case being extremely doubtful—are conspicuously fine among all the Biblical singers, so may we say that in every age in the world's history there have been one or two masters, and multitudes of minor poets, and that each has expressed up to the

fullest measure of his ability the ideas and sentiments of the age in which he lived. In a few very exceptional cases, such as Homer, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, and Shelley, we find ideas beyond the age of the writers—ideas which seem to embody sentiments that are new, or are soon destined to become universal. From the poets of the world we may glean ideas upon which to found the noblest philosophy, the highest morality, the purest religion—using the latter word in a purely secular sense.

Beginning with the crudest thoughts, we go step by step until we are able to build up a veritable pyramid of ideas, which would demonstrate the progressive character of humanity in all ages—in its social, political, and moral life.

In an earlier part of this chapter we endeavoured to point out that beneath the undoubtedly poetical effusions of the Biblical poets we frequently found low and coarse ideas of God and man, and debasing ideas concerning man's work and his conduct towards his fellow man. If we are able to show that poets who laid no claim to Divine inspiration were capable of loftier and holier views than those entertained by the so-called God-inspired writers of antiquity, we shall have demonstrated either that the Bible poets were not so highly developed as most people imagine—that is, they were less civilised than their descendants—or that uninspired persons are often superior both mentally and morally to inspired ones, in which case the value of inspiration may not only be doubted, but denied.

Mr. Gladstone has shown that the poet Homer held very lofty ideas in respect to God and man; but when the learned and esteemed English statesman goes as far as declaring that Homer was in all respects equal to Shakespeare, we may regard it in the same light as the exaggerated statement of Algernon Swinburne—the

modern Shelley—who affirmed, in an article in the *Nineteenth Century*, that Shakespeare had only one equal in the world's history, as poet, philosopher, and playwright, and that was Victor Hugo.

The truth is that every man of genius stands alone and unapproachable in his own particular line ; and, just as no man of good sense would think of comparing a great tragedian with a great comedian—though both were actors—or even one tragedian with another, unless both enacted the same part, so no great poet can be justly compared with another master, because each in his own line has great qualities, indefinable qualities, which make comparison impossible. That Shakespeare was a great poet all men acknowledge ; that he held lofty ideas of humanity is unquestionable. Take his sublime declaration : “What a piece of work is man ! How noble in reason ! how infinite in faculties ! in form, and moving, how express and admirable ! in action, how like an angel ! in apprehension, how like a god ! the beauty of the world ! the paragon of animals !”

Next to a lofty idea of man is a noble idea of nature as a whole—of ideal purity and beauty. Of the beautiful in nature John Keats says :—

“A thing of beauty is a joy forever.
Its loveliness increases ; it will never
Pass into nothingness, but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health and quiet breathing.
Therefore, on every morrow are we wreathing
A flowery band to bind us to the earth,
Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
Of all the unhealthy and o’erdarkened ways
Made for our searching. Yes, in spite of all,
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon,
Trees, old and young, sprouting a shady boon
For simple sheep ; and such are daffodils

With the green world they live in ; and clear rills,
That for themselves a cooling covert make
’Gainst the hot season ; the mid-forest brake,
Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk rose blooms.
And such, too, is the grandeur of the dooms
We have imagined for the mighty dead ;
All lovely tales that we have heard or read ;
An endless fountain of immortal drink
Pouring into us from the heaven’s brink.”

If men have any opinion of God at all, any belief in him, it is well to have an elevated one. For a lofty and majestic view take Pope’s. He says :—

“All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
Whose body Nature is, and God the soul ;
That, changed through all, and yet in all the same,
Great in the earth as in the ethereal frame ;
Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
Glow in the stars, and blossoms in the trees ;
Lives through all life, extends through all extent,
Spreads undivided, operates unspent ;
Breathes in our soul, informs our mortal part ;
As full, as perfect, in a hair as heart ;
As full, as perfect, in vile man that mourns
As the rapt seraph that adores and burns.
To him, no high, no low, no great, no small :
He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all.”

Here, then, we have from profane writers nobler ideas than any that entered the minds of the Bible poets. Bible poets sang the song of warfare ; uninspired poets have sent up an earnest cry for peace. Physical and intellectual freedom were as nothing to the Bible poets ; yet for ages profane poets have pleaded for liberty in every form as the great essential to progress. Shall we quote Shelley, or Milton, or Burns ? Let the maligncd Atheist poet speak :—

“ODE TO THE ASSERTERS OF LIBERTY.
“Arise, arise, arise !
There is blood on the earth that denies ye bread.
Be your wounds like eyes

To weep for the dead, the dead, the dead,
 What other grief were it just to pay?
 Your sons, your wives, your brethren were they!
 Who said they were slain on the battle day?

"Awaken, awaken, awaken!
 The slave and the tyrant are twin-born foes;
 Be the cold chains shaken
 To the dust where your kindred repose, repose;
 Their bones in the grave will start and move
 When they hear the voices of those they love
 Most loud in the holy combat above.

"Wave, wave high the banner
 When Freedom is riding to conquest by,
 Though the slaves that fan her
 Be Famine and Toil, giving sigh for sigh.
 And ye who attend her imperial car,
 Lift not your hands in the banded war,
 But in her defence whose children ye are.

"Glory, glory, glory,
 To those who have greatly suffered and done!
 Never name in story
 Was greater than that which ye shall have won.
 Conquerors have conquered their foes alone
 Whose revenge, pride, and power they have overthrown.
 Rise ye, more victorious, over your own.

"Bind, bind every brow
 With crownlets of violet, ivy, and pine;
 Hide the blood-stains now
 With hues which sweet Nature has made divine—
 Green strength, azure hope, eternity.
 But let not the pansy among them be;
 Ye were injured, and that means memory."

Or again:—

"Rise like lions after slumber,
 In unvanquishable number;
 Shake your chains to earth, like dew
 Which in sleep had fallen on you!
 Ye are many, they are few!"

(*"The Masque of Anarchy."*)

Intellectual liberty we want, that we may discover truth,
 to the end that we may act upon our knowledge, by

living a career of virtue. Truth and virtue, these are
 humanity's most glorious crowns. Of truth Russell
 Lowell sings:—

"Truth needs no champions; in the infinite deep
 Of everlasting soul her strength abides;
 From nature's heart her mighty pulses leap,
 Through nature's veins her strength undying tides.

"I watch the circle of the eternal years,
 And read forever in the storied page
 One lengthened roll of blood and wrong and tears,
 One onward step of truth from age to age.

"No power can die that ever wrought for truth;
 Thereby a law of nature it became,
 And lives unwithered in its sinewy youth,
 When he who called it forth is but a name."

And for the efficacy of virtue we quote again from
 Shelley:—

"The virtuous man,
 As great in his humility as kings
 Are little in their grandeur; he who leads
 Invincibly a life of resolute good,
 And stands amid the silent dungeon depths
 More free and fearless than the trembling judge,
 Who, clothed in venal power, vainly strove
 To bind the impassive spirit; when he falls
 His mild eye beams benevolence no more;
 Withered the hand outstretched but to relieve;
 Sunk reason's simple eloquence, that rolled
 But to appall the guilty. Yes, the grave
 Hath quenched that eye, and death's relentless frost
 Withered that arm; but the unfading fame
 Which virtue hangs upon its votary's tomb;
 The deathless memory of that man whom kings
 Call to their mind and tremble; the remembrance
 With which the happy spirit contemplates
 Its well-spent pilgrimage on earth,
 Shall never pass away."

Embodied in this ideal form, we find the highest senti-
 ments of all the ages. What a vast gulf it is that
 separates us from the remote past—the ages of ignorance

and superstition, the ages of lust and passion, of folly and faith! Yet from the distant past to the present there is an unbroken chain even in the world of poetry. Every poetic effect has had its cause; and, though we cannot put our finger upon every link, who can doubt that there is a perfect chain of development from the earliest dawn of poetry till the sun shall reach its zenith? Tennyson well says:—

“ Yet I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the
suns;
Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and I linger on the shore;
And the individual withers, and the world is more and more.”

And this is true, whether there be a God behind phenomena or not; whether the evolution of the universe be the work of a Supreme Intelligence, or result only from the inherent forces of nature operating by invariable law through all time.

CHAPTER X.

BIBLE ART.

Emerson on Art—Hebrew Ignorance of Arts and Sciences
—*The Anti-Sculpture Commandment—The Tabernacle*
—*Imported Art—Aaron's Fiasco—Hebrew Music—*
Tragic and Comic Elements in the Bible—Greek Art
—*Christian Europe Compared with Alexandria.*

WHAT is art? Emerson* well expresses it when he says: “The conscious utterance of thought by speech or action, to any end, is art. From the first imitative babble of the child to the despotism of eloquence, from the first pile of toys or chip bridge to the masonry of Minot Rock Lighthouse or the Pacific railroad, from the tattooing of the Owhyhees to the Vatican Gallery, from the simplest expedient of private prudence to the American Constitution, from its first to its last works, art is the Spirit's voluntary use and combination of things to serve its end.....If we follow the popular distinction of works according to their aim, we should say the spirit, in its creation, aims at use or at beauty, and hence art divides itself into the useful and the fine arts. The useful arts comprehend not only those that lie next to instinct, as agriculture, building, weaving, etc.; but also navigation, practical chemistry, and the construction of all the grand and delicate tools and instruments by which man serves himself; as language, the watch, the ship, the decimal cipher; and also the

* “Society and Solitude.”

sciences, so far as they are made serviceable to political economy."

Further on Emerson endeavours to show how "the laws of each art are convertible into the laws of every other." "They are the re-appearance of one mind working in many materials to many temporary ends. Raphael paints wisdom, Handel sings it, Phidias carves it, Shakespeare writes it, Wren builds it, Columbus sails it, Luther preaches it, Washington arms it, Watt mechanises it."

Whether or not we accept Emerson's theory of "the re-appearance of one mind," we cannot fail to be impressed with the artistic halo which he flings round all forms of human life and effort. But, in this respect, the Biblical writers are remarkably wanting. They were too much absorbed with religious emotion to take an interest in creating things of beauty in the world around them. The result was, as Dr. Barrows, in his popular "Biblical Geography and Antiquities," remarks with much simplicity: "The Hebrews were not distinguished for their attainments in the arts and sciences, their energies being turned in another and a higher [!] direction.....In the peaceful arts they did not excel the neighbouring nations, and in some respects fell short of them."

Among the commandments alleged to have been given by Jahveh to Moses from Mount Sinai, the second runs as follows: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." This was scarcely the way to encourage sculpture and painting. And, as a matter of fact, the Jews never shone in that direction. The art galleries of the great European museums contain no Hebrew masterpieces. The Tabernacle, built on plans drawn by the Divine hand, was a mean and primitive affair. Solomon's temple was a

improvement on the Tabernacle; but the artistic merit was altogether due to Hiram, a Gentile. The people of God had to import their art, as Solomon imported his apes and horses!

On one occasion a distinguished Jew—Aaron the High Priest, to wit—tried his hand at sculpture on a system that would astonish our Royal Academicians. Having, according to his own account, thrown a heap of golden jewels into the fire, "there came out this calf," which he proceeded to reduce to more elegant proportions with a graving-tool (Exodus xxxii.). We strongly suspect that the alleged reason given for Moses' destruction of the calf is not the correct one. His education had probably imbued him with some notion of artistic form, and he was so disgusted at Aaron's amateur performance that he speedily consigned it to oblivion.

Music and singing were arts also cultivated by the Jews, who prophesied, or, as we should say, performed, on harps, cymbals, and lutes, especially upon days of public rejoicing. In Numbers the following instructions are given for the use of the silver trumpets: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Make thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them, that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps. And when they shall blow with them, all the assembly shall assemble themselves to thee at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation" (x. 1-3).

There are many instances in the Bible of the employment of instrumental music: among the most notable are when the walls of Jericho fell at the trumpet blast (Joshua vi.); and, again, when David had slain Goliath the children of Israel returned rejoicing at their victory over the Philistines (1 Samuel xviii. 6). That the Israelites often indulged in song is evidenced by the fact that they sang a hymn of triumph after their passage through

the Red Sea (Exodus xv. 1-22). And the women joined the warriors on their return from battle, and sang the praises of David and Saul as an expression of joy at their achievements (1 Samuel xviii.).

In my judgment, the most dramatic story in the Pentateuch is that of "Joseph the Dreamer," who is put into a pit by his jealous brothers, and afterwards rescued by Reuben and sold to the Ishmaelites, who, in their turn, dispose of him to Potiphar, an officer in the service of Pharaoh in Egypt. The story of Joseph being torn to pieces by wild beasts; the grief of the father at the supposed death of his favourite son; Joseph's advancement in Egypt; the visit of his brethren in search of food; their love for Benjamin put to the test; and the clever way in which the finale is brought about by Joseph (metaphorically) taking off his beard, and exclaiming to their amazement, "Behold it is I, Joseph, your long-lost brother," form splendid materials for a strong sensational melodrama.

Most Biblical scholars are agreed that the Book of Job is not a Hebrew book. It is, however, very dramatic in outline, though the incidents of it are subordinated to the dialogue. Materials for tragedy and comedy are abundant throughout the pages of the Bible; and these are not limited to the Old Testament, but may be found in about equal proportions in the New.

In the Pentateuch we have the old story of the trial of Abraham's faith, and the fine scene in which young Isaac is rescued from the assassin's knife, wielded by Abraham, by a melodramatic cry of "Hold, enough!" from a mysterious voice in the heavens; we have also the stronger tragedy of the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter; while, for comic incident, nothing can surpass the rod-performances of Moses and Aaron in Egypt, and the peregrinations of the prophet Balaam upon the gentle creature, who, to the usual asinine genius for

going the wrong road, added a singular conversational charm; unless it be Samson's broad jawbone combat with a thousand thick-skulled Philistines, or Jonah's excursion to Nineveh. Indeed, viewed from a Rationalistic standpoint, the Bible is a book full of entertainment and amusing stories.

In the New Testament we have some tragic incidents in the life, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus; but these are plentifully besprinkled with comedy.

In a previous chapter we have dealt with the poetry of the Bible; let us here dwell for a short time on the evolution of other forms of art indicated above. It is certain that, long before the Christian era—at least five centuries before the alleged birth of Christ—the Greeks had made great progress in many forms of art. Greek sculpture, Greek painting and oratory, had reached a high degree of development in the days of Socrates and Plato, as George Grote has shown in his admirable "History of Greece;" indeed, it is very questionable whether modern European art to-day is equal in some respects to that of ancient Greece or ancient Rome. There is, however, a reason for this. It should be remembered that, for centuries, the arts in Europe were almost entirely neglected, while, during the Dark Ages, anything pertaining to the improvement of things exclusively "secular" was regarded as abhorrent. Even language was allowed almost to decay in the tenth century. As Hallam says*: "When Latin had thus ceased to be a living language, the whole treasury of knowledge was locked up from the eyes of the people. The few who might have imbibed a taste for literature, if books had been accessible to them, were reduced to abandon pursuits that could be cultivated only through a kind of education not easily within their reach. Schools

* "Europe During the Middle Ages," page 575.

confined to cathedrals and monasteries, and exclusively designed for the purposes of religion, afforded no encouragement or opportunities to the laity. The worst effect was that, as the newly-formed languages were hardly made use of in writing, Latin being still preserved in all legal instruments and public correspondence, the very use of letters, as well as of books, was forgotten. For many centuries, to sum up the account of ignorance in a word, it was rare for a layman, of whatever rank, to know how to sign his name. Their charters, till the use of seals became general, were subscribed with the mark of the cross."

While art was, comparatively speaking, dormant in Europe until the seventeenth century, it flourished in Greece and Rome for centuries before and after the Christian era. Three hundred years before Christ, as Draper tells us,* "Greek architects and Greek engineers had made Alexandria the most beautiful city of the ancient world. They had filled it with magnificent palaces, temples, theatres. In its centre, at the intersection of its two grand avenues, which crossed each other at right angles, and in the midst of gardens, fountains, obelisks, stood the mausoleum, in which, embalmed after the manner of the Egyptians, rested the body of Alexander.....The Alexandrian Museum was commenced by Ptolemy Soter, and was completed by his son, Ptolemy Philadelphus.....Its sculptured apartments contained the Philadelphian Library, and were crowded with the choicest statues and pictures. This library comprised four hundred thousand (400,000) volumes, which were eventually increased to seven hundred thousand.....Alexandria was not merely the capital of Egypt; it was the intellectual metropolis of the world. Here it was truly said that the genius of the

* "Conflict Between Religion and Science," pp. 18-30.

East met the genius of the West, and this Paris of antiquity became a focus of fashionable dissipation and universal scepticism. In the allurements of its bewitching society even the Jews forgot their patriotism. They abandoned the language of their forefathers and adopted Greek."

The philosophy of Aristotle and the ethics of Zeno the Stoic formed an important part in Greek education for hundreds of years, and helped to form European thought in the early ages of Christianity. Whatever art there was in Europe, however, up to the eighth century of the Christian era, was destroyed during the many religious wars that were waged between this and the sixteenth century, or was lost during the Dark Ages. The Arabs alone preserved the arts and sciences; and, when art got a chance of being brought out of obscurity into the light, it was to the poor Arabs we had to look for assistance.

Happily, art and science to-day are almost free from the tyranny of bigots in high places, and, with the growth of intelligence among the masses, are taking their proper places as the most noble and useful aids to man's progress.

THE BIBLE GOD.

Evolution of the God Idea—Fetishes—Tribal Gods—J. S. Mill on Polytheism—Character of God as Illustrated by the Bible—A Tale of Horror—Shelley's Indignant Protest—The Bible and Woman—Arguments for the Existence of God—Phenomena only are Knowable.

To the student the history of the evolution of the God idea is one of exceeding interest and fascination. In fact, it is the history of man's earliest explanations of natural phenomena. If we go back in imagination several thousand years, we shall find man in a very rude condition, steeped in ignorance respecting Nature and her mode of action, and attributing all phenomena to living creatures, which he believed to possess qualities far transcending his own. Man's first objects of worship were fetishes. In the course of ages, however, he began to see that he owed much of the pleasure of his existence to natural forces—to the sun, to seas, rivers, lakes, etc. To these, therefore, he transferred his affections, and made them the objects of his worship. By and by, as man developed, he began to see that, however wonderful were the effects produced by the great forces about him, these were not intelligent, nor were they uniformly beneficial. Consequently, he imagined intelligent spirits behind these forces; and these, in their turn, became his gods.

When men had formed themselves into tribes and nations, they established gods—tribal deities—of their own manufacture; imaginary beings, but real enough to the ignorant people who believed in them; and to these they attributed all sorts of extraordinary powers. Among the Hindoos, Brahma was such a god; among the Persians, Ormuzd. The Mohammedan's God was Allah; while the Jewish and Christian God was either Elohim or Jahveh—*i.e.*, Jehovah. Two distinct gods at least are described by the writers of Genesis—the Elohim of the first chapter and the Jehovah of the second and many subsequent chapters. These gods were believed to rule and govern the universe; but more particularly to devote themselves to the preservation and progress of the Jewish race.

The highest attributes were assigned to Jahveh, who ultimately became the only god of the Jewish people. That the belief in a plurality of gods is a perfectly natural belief in a low order of mind is seen by the fact that nearly all savage races attribute the multifarious phenomena of the universe to a variety of gods differing in power and goodness. John Stuart Mill says*: "For a long time the supposition appeared forced and unnatural that the diversity we see in the operations of nature can all be the work of a single will. To the untaught mind, and to all minds in pre-scientific times, the phenomena of nature seem to be the result of forces altogether heterogeneous, each taking its course quite independently of the others; and, though to attribute them to conscious wills is eminently natural, the natural tendency is to suppose as many independent wills as there are distinguishable forces of sufficient importance and interest to have been remarked and named. There is no tendency in polytheism as such to transform itself

* *Essa* on "Theism."

spontaneously into monotheism. It is true that in polytheistic systems generally the deity whose special attributes inspire the greatest degree of awe is usually supposed to have the power of controlling the other deities; and even in the most degraded perhaps of all such systems, the Hindoo, adulation heaps upon the divinity who is the immediate object of adoration epithets like those habitual to believers in a single god. But there is no real acknowledgment of one governor. Every god normally rules his particular department, though there may be a still stronger god whose power, when he chooses to exert it, can frustrate the purposes of the inferior divinity. There could be no real belief in one creator and governor until mankind had begun to see in the apparently confused phenomena which surrounded them a system capable of being viewed as the possible working out of a single plan. This conception of the world was perhaps anticipated (though less frequently than is often supposed) by individuals of exceptional genius; but it could become common only after a rather long cultivation of scientific thought."

Among the attributes ascribed by the Jews to their God Jahveh were infinite, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, and infinite wisdom and goodness. Now, nothing can be clearer to the scientific mind than that the attributes claimed by the theologian for his Deity are all impossible qualities, and cannot co-exist in one being. Infinity, omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, and infinite goodness and mercy, these are but the attributes of man very much exaggerated. Man is finite; God is made infinite. Man has a small degree of power or might; God is said to be almighty. Man has a little wisdom; God is infinitely wise. Man displays a little goodness sometimes; for God it is claimed that he is infinitely good at all times. But how is it possible for God to be infinite if he exists apart from the universe?

How can God know anything if there is nothing outside of him to know? How can he be intelligent if he is not an organised being with thinking faculties? And he who possesses thinking faculties can never be said to be omniscient, because every day's experience brings additional knowledge to the mind that perceives, reflects, and judges. Let us for a moment consider the attributes of the Bible God, and see how far they accord with the description given of them by believers.

Jahveh is alleged to be infinite, yet when we refer to the Bible we find that the Bible God walks (Gen. iii. 8), talks (Deut. v. 24), smells (Gen. viii. 21), works (Gen. ii. 2), rests (Gen. ii. 2). We are told that he is unchangeable, yet we find upon examination that the Bible God repents (Gen. vi. 6). We are informed that he is all good, yet we find that God curses (Gen. iii. 14), hardens men's hearts (Ex. xiv. 4), delivers men into the Devil's power (Job ii. 6), punishes the guiltless (1 Sam. xv. 3), creates evil (Is. xlv. 7), makes some men the slaves of others (Ex. xxi. 2), and orders the wholesale slaughter of men, women, and children (1 Sam. xv.). Indeed, as Mr. G. W. Foote says*: "Jehovah never had the faintest idea of justice until the Jews had sufficiently progressed to give him lessons in that virtue, and he heartily detested every sign of mental freedom. He was so 'jealous' that he visited the sins of the fathers upon the children of those who neglected him for three or four generations. According to the thirteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, he commanded his 'holy people' to stone to death any person who broached new ideas on the subject of religion, even though the heretic were bound to them by the dearest tie of friendship or blood. The twenty-eighth chapter of the same book contains a list of the curses he would inflict on them if they 'went

* "The God the Christians Swear By," p. 9.

after other gods.' It is one of the most terrible denunciations in all literature.....In return for the undivided worship of his chosen people, God promised, and in some cases gave them, many advantages at the expense of their neighbours. He told them to borrow of the Egyptians without the remotest intention of paying them back. He forbade them to practise usury with each other; but permitted them to practise it with the 'stranger,' so that no alien should be able to say to them, 'I was a stranger, and ye took me not in.' He told them that they should lend unto many nations, but never borrow; that he should make them the head, and not the tail. He depopulated whole districts for them to inhabit, and carried out the process in the most hellish manner, sparing neither age nor sex. And all this was done solely through his good pleasure, and not because the Jews were any better than the populations who were exterminated; for we are expressly told that they did 'more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel.' Moral obligations do not concern him. He claims the potter's right over the clay, and smashes one vessel and preserves another, without any respect to their merits. He 'hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.' The saint who goes to heaven and the sinner who goes to hell are both 'elected' by his grace; and the latter has no more right to complain than the dying pauper, who, when he resented the statement that he was going to hell, was told that he ought to be thankful there was a hell to go to."

This is undoubtedly a strong statement of the case; but a careful perusal of the pages of Holy Writ will show that it is as true as it is vigorous.

The savagery of this Jewish God we have already dwelt upon in a previous chapter; but, in order the more vividly to show the horrid depth to which Jahveh could

descend, we will ask our readers to ponder well the following passage from the twentieth chapter of Deuteronomy: "When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee. And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it: and when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword: but the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the Lord thy God hath given thee. Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities which are very far off from thee, which are not of the cities of these nations. But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth." Can anything more villainously barbarous be conceived? All the little ones to be ruthlessly slaughtered, and the women to be given over to a horde of soldiers to satisfy their brutal and lustful natures; and thirty-two virgins to be preserved as a tribute to the Lord! (Num. xxxi. 40). In all the literature of the world there is nothing more detestably wicked than this. Truly does Shelley sing* :—

"The name of God
Has fenced about all crime with holiness;
Himself the creature of his worshippers;
Whose names and attributes and passions change—
Seeva, Buddh, Foh, Jehovah, God, or Lord—
Even with the human dupes who build his shrines
Still serving o'er the war-polluted world

* "Queen Mab."

For desolation's watchword ; whether hosts
 Stain his death-blushing chariot wheels, as on
 Triumphantlly they roll, whilst Brahmins raise
 A sacred hymn to mingle with the groans ;
 Or countless partners of his power divide
 His tyranny to weakness ; or the smoke
 Of burning towns, the cries of female helplessness,
 Unarmed old age, and youth and infancy,
 Horribly massacred, ascend to heaven
 In honour of his name ; or, last and worst,
 Earth groans beneath religion's iron age,
 And priests dare babble of a God of peace
 Even whilst their hands are red with guiltless blood,
 Murdering the while, uprooting every germ
 Of truth, exterminating, spoiling all,
 Making the earth a slaughter-house."

The treatment of women as sanctioned by Jahveh is an indication of the barbarous condition of the Jewish people under Moses and the other early leaders of that ancient race. Jahveh sanctioned polygamy, and allowed women to be treated as chattels without a word of disapproval ; and even in the New Testament we find very few elevating ideas with regard to the position of woman in society. Throughout the pages of the Bible she is referred to as inferior to man ; and the lesson is constantly inculcated that it is the duty of women to keep themselves in subjection, and to obey their husbands' behests in all things.

Such, then, are some of the crude and revolting ideas attributed to Jahveh by those who were specially privileged to be in communication with him. In short, the God of the Jewish imagination was a small-minded, tyrannical giant, who was supposed to reside somewhere above the clouds, and who came down occasionally to inspect his earthly dominions, and to attend to the machinery by which they were governed.

Naturally, in course of time there arose men with goodness of heart and courage enough to repudiate the

Hebrew conception of God. These were Deists ; they formulated on their part an idea of God that was equally a figment of the imagination—a pure, ethereal sort of being, without body, parts, or passions. In fact, their God is the one so well described by Curé Meslier in his little work, "Bon Sens." The writer asks, "Qu'est-ce que Dieu ?" to which he cleverly replies : "C'est un mot abstrait fait pour designer une force cachée de la nature ; ou c'est un point mathématique qui n'a ni longueur, ni largeur, ni profondeur" ("It is an abstract word, coined to designate the hidden force of nature ; or, rather, it is a mathematical point having neither length, breadth, nor thickness"). For this ethereal God they put forth various arguments, with a view of demonstrating his existence. One set of reasoners adopt the *à priori* method of argument ; another the *à posteriori* ; while a third prefer a mixture of both. But they are all alike unable to demonstrate to the intelligent mind that an infinite, all-wise, all-good, and all-powerful Deity exists, who is the author and governor of the universe. The *à priori* reasoners argue that God is the "great first cause." But they do not inquire, What caused God ? nor do they see that in an infinite regression there can be no first cause. If God is infinite, God is all that is ; yet these Theists argue for a universe apart from God. Nor are they more fortunate in their *à posteriori* reasoning. They argue for a designer of nature who was himself undesigned. They argue for an all-powerful and all-good designer ; but they close their eyes to all the evil in the universe.

Those who argue that all men are conscious of the existence of God overlook the fact that there are thousands of Atheists and Agnostics in the world who believe in the indestructibility, and consequently the eternity, of matter. If matter is eternal, it is uncreated ; indeed, the word "created" has no meaning to the

scientific mind, which knows nothing about the origination of substance, but knows only the phenomena and phenomenal changes by which the unknown substance reveals itself to human consciousness.

CHAPTER XII.

JESUS AS GOD.

God a Magnified Man—Macaulay on the Natural Craving for Images—The Development of Christ's Divinity—Voltaire on the Socinian Doctrine—Difficulties Surrounding the Dogma of Christ's Godhead—Suspensions as to his Sanity—Problems Suggested by his Agony and Despair—J. S. Mill's Estimate of the Man Jesus.

FEUERBACH truly affirms that "every man makes his own God." Martin Luther seems to have supported this view, for he said: "God is a blank sheet of paper, upon which nothing is written but that which you yourself write." The highest conception that any man can form of God is that of a great man—great in every respect: gigantic in proportions, mighty in power, noble in action, magnanimous in character. Does it not occur to every rational being that a God who is not a person is no God at all? The cultured few may define God in terms of an abstract character; but the masses think only of the concrete. Macaulay observes*: "What is spirit? What are our own minds, the portion of spirit with which we are best acquainted? We observe certain phenomena. We cannot explain them into material causes. We, therefore, infer that there exists something which is not material. But of this something we have no idea. We can define it only by negatives.

* Essay on "Milton."

We can reason about it only by symbols. We use the word, but we have no image of the thing; and the business of poetry is with images, and not with words. The poet uses words indeed; but they are merely the instruments of his art, not its objects. They are the materials which he is to dispose in such a manner as to present a picture to the mental eye. And, if they are not so disposed, they are no more entitled to be called poetry than a bale of canvas and a box of colours to be called a painting. Logicians may reason about abstractions. But the great mass of mankind can never feel an interest in them. They must have images. The strong tendency of the multitude in all ages and nations to idolatry can be explained on no other principle. The first inhabitants of Greece, there is some reason to believe, worshipped one invisible Deity. But the necessity of having something more definite to adore produced, in a few centuries, the innumerable crowd of gods and goddesses. In like manner, the ancient Persians thought it impious to exhibit the creator under a human form. Yet even these transferred to the sun the worship which speculatively they considered due only to the supreme mind. The history of the Jews is the record of a continued struggle between pure Theism, supported by the most terrible sanctions, and the strangely fascinating desire of having some visible and tangible object of adoration. Perhaps none of the secondary causes which Gibbon has assigned for the rapidity with which Christianity spread over the world, while Judaism scarcely ever acquired a proselyte, operated more powerfully than this feeling. "God the uncreated, the incomprehensible, the invisible, attracted few worshippers. A philosopher might admire so noble a conception; but the crowd turned away in disgust from words which presented no image to their minds."

But the question is: Is there behind the so-called

"noble conception" of the Theist any reality to be presented? A facetious friend of mine once observed "that the only idea a person could have of God was an idea of *an idea*, of which nobody had the slightest idea." If we subtract from any description of the Divine Being all distinctly human qualities, nothing is left but a vague and unsubstantial shadow of a shade.

Many Christians who appear to have very little faith in Jahveh speak of Jesus as "the very God." The man Jesus in reality embodies their highest conception of Deity. Mr. Spurgeon rarely speaks of the God of the Old Testament, but expends all his eloquence in panegyric upon the Godhead of Christ. But the idea of Jesus as a God is, comparatively speaking, a new one. It is, indeed, the result of ages of development. Voltaire says*: "The Socinians, who are regarded as blasphemers, do not recognise the divinity of Jesus Christ. They dare to pretend, with the philosophers of antiquity, with the Jews, the Mohammedans, and most other nations, that the idea of a God-man is monstrous; that the distance from God to man is infinite; and that it is impossible for a perishable body to be finite, immense, or eternal. They have the confidence to quote Eusebius, Bishop of Cæsarea, in their favour, who, in his 'Ecclesiastical History,' book i., chapter ix., declares that it is absurd to imagine the uncreated and unchangeable nature of Almighty God taking the form of a man. They cite the fathers of the Church—Justin and Tertullian, who have said the same thing; Justin in his 'Dialogue with Trypho,' and Tertullian in his 'Discourse against Praxeas.' They quote St. Paul, who never calls Jesus Christ *God*, and who calls him *man*

* "Philosophical Dictionary." The great critic's apparent condemnation of the Socinians' liberal doctrine is, of course, only ironical.

very often. They carry their audacity so far as to affirm that the Christians passed three entire ages in forming by degrees the apotheosis of Jesus, and that they only raised this astonishing edifice by the example of pagans, who had deified mortals. At first, according to them, Jesus was only regarded as a man inspired by God, and then as a creature more perfect than others. They gave him some time after a place above the angels, as St. Paul tells us. Every day added to his greatness. He in time became an emanation proceeding from God. This was not enough; he was born before time. At last he was made God, substantial with God. Crellius, Volquelsius, Natalis, Alexander, and Hornbeck have supported all these blasphemies by arguments which astonish the wise and mislead the weak. Above all, Faustus Socinius spread the seeds of this doctrine in Europe; and at the end of the sixteenth century a new species of Christianity was established. There were already more than three hundred."

Let us now briefly consider in what sense Jesus may be regarded as a God. In the first place, he was not an infinite but a finite being. He was not eternal, but was born like any other human being, and was one of a numerous family, his father being Joseph, a carpenter, and his mother a certain lady who is referred to by the largest section of the Christian Church as the Virgin Mary. Nor can it be said that Jesus was all-wise. Take one illustration. He did not know that it was folly to curse a fig-tree which did not bear fruit out of season (Matt. xxi. 19). Nor was he infinite in his goodness. He said that he came only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. xv. 24); and, though it is subsequently stated that he enlarged his mission so as to include all mankind, the passage in which he is alleged to have made the declaration of such wide-reaching import is admitted by most Biblical commen-

tators to be an interpolation (Mark xvi. 15). It must be remembered that the high estimates formed of Jesus by such eminent writers and scholars as Ernest Renan and John Stuart Mill are based on the view that Jesus was merely man. Both these thinkers repudiate as altogether absurd the idea of Jesus being God.*

Thomas Paine said that he admired the personal characteristics of Jesus. Colonel Ingersoll says the same. Mr. Charles Watts and the present writer have over and over again, in lectures and essays, spoken in terms of admiration of many of the excellent qualities in the character of Jesus. But this is in no wise an admission that the Prophet of Nazareth is worthy of such admiration if regarded in the character of a God. Indeed, I agree with the writer who said that "the noblest of men make the most insignificant of gods." From all the evidence accessible to us, it seems perfectly clear that Jesus was an enthusiast, who did not always assume the noblest bearing towards those who differed from him, and who not only condemned his opponents in extravagantly strong terms, but urged his disciples to take an even more offensive course (Mark vi. 11). Jesus indeed sometimes appeared to lose his mental balance, so much so that his own friends declared that he was beside himself (Mark iii. 21). From the evidence afforded by the Gospels, Jules Soury concludes that Jesus suffered periodically from congestion of the brain, and was sometimes insane.† Whether this theory be true or false, there can be little doubt that some of the doings of Jesus are altogether inexplicable and unjustifiable from a purely rationalistic standpoint. Let us grant for a moment that it was possible for Jesus, if he were really God, to cast out devils. But we strongly

* See Renan's "Life of Jesus" and Mill's "Essay on Theism."

† See "Jesus and Israel," by Jules Soury.

deny that it was a moral act to send the poor devils into the stomachs of a number of inoffensive pigs, and so disturb their tender susceptibilities as to drive them to solve the problem, "To be or not to be," by a hurried departure to a watery grave (Mark v. 13).

If we accept the alleged miracles of Jesus, difficulties still confront us. We may admit that he walked upon the sea; that he healed Peter's mother-in-law of a great fever; that he fed five thousand hungry people with five loaves and two fishes, and that more fragments were taken up after the repast than would have reconstituted the loaves and fishes several times over; that he cured somebody of leprosy; made the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, and the blind to see; and then we may ask how it was that a being who was capable of performing such wonders impressed his own disciples so little that in the hour of trouble they all forsook him and fled (Mark xiv. 50)? It was just as though he were some poor charlatan, who had no moral hold on his followers. If Jesus were God, it is strange that, when he encountered the Devil, who asked him for proof of his divinity, he allowed his distinguished critic to go away unconvinced? Strange, too, that, when Jesus came to die, he prayed, "Oh, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me" (Matt. xxvi. 39). If Jesus were God, he must have known that to let the cup pass was at one stroke to send the whole of mankind to eternal perdition. Moreover, he surely knew his own mind, and was not likely, by a prayer to himself, to change his own immutable will. But all these difficulties shrink to comparatively small proportions beside that which is involved in his exclamation in the last agony of all, as he hung stretched upon the cross: "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*"—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" If Jesus were God, in what sense could it be that he had forsaken himself? If he had

come to die, to save the world, was this extraordinary utterance indicative of grief at having to undergo such a trying ordeal? Besides, as God, Jesus must have known that he could not die—that an eternal being could not pass through the agony of death; or, at worst, that, if he died, his invisible spirit possessed the power at any moment to resurrect his visible body, and thus triumph over his persecutors and murderers. The Gospels offer no explanation of these enigmas. The clergy are profuse with apologies; but they have no satisfactory answer to such heretical questions.

Jesus, it seems more rational to suppose, was a man, and nothing but a man. He had his faults; but, taking him for all-in-all, he was a splendid sample of a good, virtuous, large-hearted lover of his kind, and a pioneer of progress. And it is an ideal Jesus, created by a fertile Christian imagination, that is deified and made the object of Christian worship. Probably Mill is right when he affirms that "religion cannot be said to have made a bad choice in pitching on this man as the ideal representative and guide of humanity; nor, even now, would it be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue, from the abstract into the concrete, than to endeavour so to live that Christ would approve our life."*

* "Essay on Theism."

THE SOUL AND A FUTURE STATE.

The Old Testament Ignored the Immortality of the Soul—Opinion of Ecclesiastes on Human Life—Socrates—Jesus—Cremation and the Resurrection—Origin of the Belief in Immortality—Pre-Natal Existence—Dr. Baylee's View—Relations between Intelligence and Brain—Colonel Olcott on the Souls of Idiots—Dr. Büchner Declares Mind Inseparable from the Material Organ.

FROM a careful examination it appears that the Old Testament writers had no belief in the existence of an immortal element in man ; for, with one exception—that of the book of Ecclesiastes—the Scriptures are silent on the subject. Moses said nothing about it ; Samuel was equally silent. However, the writer of Ecclesiastes—alleged to have been Solomon—had a very decided opinion on the subject. He declared dogmatically : “For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts : even one thing befalleth them : as the one dieth so dieth the other ; yea, they have all one breath ; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast : for all is vanity. All go unto one place ; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth ? Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his own works ; for that is his portion : for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him ?” (Ecclesiastes iii. 19–22). Although the Jews, before

the age of Christ, would seem to have had no belief in a future state, the Greeks very early formulated their views on the subject. In Plato's “Dialogues” we have an account of the views of Socrates on the question ; and, in the main, he agreed with Pythagoras, who held that, just in proportion as a man lived a noble life, his soul at death entered a higher being, while the soul of the man who lived an ignoble career descended to a lower animal. In the New Testament we have a very different view advanced. Nothing is said about the immortal soul ; but the theory is put forward that, after death, there is to be a universal resurrection, not, however, of the soul, but of the body of each individual born into the world. Even Jesus himself believed, and, as the legend goes, gave the sanction of his authority to, this doctrine, by coming bodily out of the grave and appearing to his disciples as though to demonstrate the truth of a material resurrection. And this belief in the resurrection of the body was entertained by Christians for at least eighteen centuries after the death of Christ. Indeed, among some sects the belief is entertained to this day ; and it certainly appears to us to be a logical deduction from the declarations of the Gospels. A few years ago the then Bishop of Lincoln went so far as to say, in a letter to the *Daily Telegraph*, that, if the remains of the late Lady Dilke were cremated, it would seriously interfere with the resurrection of her body on the last day. Some wicked “Infidels” replied by asking the learned Bishop, if his theory were true, what chance of resurrection there would be for the Christian martyrs who were burned at the stake ; but the Bishop maintained a discreet silence.

Among all sorts of religionists there has reigned a belief in the existence in man of an immortal element called the soul, which it is supposed will endure when the organisation has ceased to work and the body has

gone to mingle with the elements. According to Dr. Tylor, the phenomena of dreams suggested this belief to the mind of primitive man. At nightfall, when the savage laid himself down to sleep, his slumbers were often disturbed by dreams, and in these it appeared as if a part of him—or rather the ego itself—soared away from the body, and visited places he had never beheld in his waking moments, and passed through trials and troubles he knew he had never actually experienced. This, then, gave rise to the belief in a double existence—the transient existence of the body and the ceaseless existence of the “other self,” or soul. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul has undergone many changes during the last three centuries. Theologians argue that the soul is associated with the mind of man, and that man, as an intelligent being, will exist in another life for ever. If their arguments were of any value, they would logically be bound to contend that the soul is eternal, and existed before its entry into the body. For the most part, however, the clergy decline to take this ground. One notable exception I remember, and one only. The Rev. Dr. Baylee, in his debate with Mr. Bradlaugh twenty years ago—a debate conducted on the Socratic method with great ability on both sides—took the logical ground that man had always existed.

Mr. Bradlaugh asked: “Am I eternal?”

Dr. Baylee: “You are.”

Mr. Bradlaugh: “Was I in existence before I was born?”

Dr. Baylee: “You were.”

Mr. Bradlaugh: “Did I sin before I was born?”

Dr. Baylee: “You did.”

Mr. Bradlaugh: “If I had not been born, should I have suffered ‘eternal damnation’ for that sin?”

Dr. Baylee: “You would.”

Although the answers of Dr. Baylee may strike the Rationalist as highly amusing, they are logical enough

from the point of view of one who firmly believed in the immortality of the soul. But the question must naturally occur, “If we were alive before we were born, have we any consciousness of a pre-natal existence; and, if we have no recollection of being alive before we were born, what reasonable grounds have we for believing that we shall continue to live after?” Relying on faith, and not on reason, the theologian replies that he does not profess to say how it is that his soul will exist through all eternity; he merely believes that it will do so, because he thinks that he has authority in “God’s word” for such belief.

During the present century many scientific men have brought their practical and analytical minds to bear upon the subject. The first questions such men asked were: If man has a soul, what is it? where is it located? when does it come into the body? After a careful and elaborate examination, they at length reached the conclusion that, if man possessed a soul, it could not reside in his trunk or extremities, but must be in some way associated with the brain. Moreover, they discovered that the intelligence of an individual depended very largely upon the construction of the brain, its weight, quality, and convolutions. They further discovered that the races highest up in the scale of civilisation possessed the largest brains, while those lowest down possessed the smallest.

Pritchard, in his “Natural History of Man,” gives Camper’s description, showing the ascending scale of human skulls from the lowest to the highest races of mankind.* The average weight of the male human brain is forty-nine and a-half ounces; the average of the female brain forty-four ounces; in exceptional men the brain has often been found to weigh between fifty and

* For full quotation, see my pamphlet, “Man and the Lower Animals,” page 7.

sixty ounces. The brains of idiots are abnormally small, rarely weighing more than twenty-two ounces, and sometimes going down as low as ten ounces.

Now, if the soul is associated with the intelligence of man, or, in other words, with his brain, the question naturally arises, Have idiots souls? If they have, will they live again? and, if they live again, will they be idiots in their future state? because, if not, it will not be they who are living again, but some other individuals—they will have lost their identity.

Colonel Olcott, the President of the Theosophical Society, holds that the soul of an idiot is perfectly rational, only it has had the misfortune to take possession of a "rotten tenement." If this be so, it is a great pity that such an unfortunate soul cannot give a week's notice and quit. According to Colonel Olcott, however, this cannot be done. The poor soul is, therefore, doomed to remain till the rotten tenement decays, and the soul may then take possession of another body.

To demonstrate the dependence of the soul upon the brain, Dr. Louis Büchner* says: "The soul of the child becomes developed in the same degree as the material organisation of its brain becomes more perfect. The brain substance of the child is more fluid and pultaceous, richer in water and poorer in fat, than that of the adult. The differences between the grey and white substance, and other microscopic peculiarities, become only gradually developed; thus the so-called fibrillation of the brain, which is so plainly seen in the adult, is not easily observable in the child. The more marked this fibrillation grows, the more manifest becomes mental activity. The grey substance on the surface is but little developed; the convolutions are sparing and little vascular. The histological development of many parts of the nervous system

* "Force and Matter."

appear very imperfect in the new born" (Valentin). "The different mental faculties," says Vogt, "develop themselves gradually with the growth of the hemispheres."

The brain grows with the growth of the child, and, from all the evidence accessible, we may gather that it goes on growing until the individual reaches middle age; then it appears to stop for awhile, and then gradually decreases, so that, in old age, we have what is called "second childhood."

Now, if the soul develops with the brain, and cannot manifest itself without the aid of the brain, how can it be supposed that the soul will exist apart from the brain in any other world? Where there is intelligence there must be organisation; for intelligence implies brain, brain implies blood, blood implies veins and arteries—that is, organisation.

To further demonstrate the inseparable connection of brain and soul, let us consider a few more facts. The brain is the centre of all feeling. A man injures his foot; but it is the brain that feels the injury, and communicates the fact to the man. The nervous system, radiating from the brain, puts it in communication with every part of the organism; so that physical effects act perceptibly upon the mind. A man grows pale from fright, blushes from shame, and the eye sparkles with joy. An injury to the head will sometimes seriously affect the working of the brain. All this, however, could not happen if the soul was independent of the brain and could act on its own account. Professor Büchner* sums up the subject in the following terms: "But enough of facts; the whole science of man is continuous proof in favour of the connection of brain and mind; and all the verbiage of philosophical psychologists in regard to the separate existence of the soul and its

* "Force and Matter."

independence of its material organ is without the least value in opposition to the power of facts. We find no exaggeration in what Friedreich, a well-known writer on psychology, says on this point: 'The exhibition of power cannot be imagined without a material substratum. The vital power of man can manifest its activity only by means of its material organs. In proportion as the organs are manifold, so will be the phenomena of vital power, and they will vary according to the varied construction of the material substratum. Mental function is, hence, a peculiar manifestation of vital power, determined by the peculiar construction of cerebral matter. The same power which digests by means of the stomach thinks by means of the brain.'

The evolution of ideas on this subject leads us, therefore, to the conclusion that there is no evidence of the existence of soul apart from the brain. If, however, man has an immortal soul, Freethought will not kill it; on the contrary, it will strengthen it, because Freethought leads to doubt, and doubt leads to investigation, and investigation to truth, and truth is the power and glory of all life, mortal or immortal.

CHAPTER XIV.

HEAVEN HEREAFTER.

Heaven and Hell—Are they to be Literally or Figuratively Understood?—Astronomers have Failed to Discover Heaven—The Service of Man—Abou Ben Adhem.

IN the New Testament there are several passages referring to a heaven wherein it is declared that the "chosen" people of God will pass their time in everlasting happiness (Luke xviii. 30). Whether this is a figurative expression, or relates to a place which has a real existence, is a doubtful point among Christians of various sects. But this, at least, is certain, that, if the heaven is merely figurative, and means a "happy state of feeling," hell must be figurative also, and refer to the feeling of remorse suffered by people who are conscious of the wickedness of their past deeds. Bible texts may be quoted, moreover, which seem to indicate that the Gospel writers conceived heaven and hell as real places of abode for the saved or the damned in the life hereafter. Jesus certainly described hell as a place of physical torment (Matthew xxv. 41), and not a mere "state of feeling," and heaven as a literal and material abode of bliss rather than a pleasant condition of the mind (Matthew xix. 21).

For centuries belief in the real existence of heaven and hell prevailed among Christians; and many even to-day would throw over their belief in the Bible altogether rather than yield up their adherence to what they regard as its most important teachings. Mr. Spurgeon

still preaches a material heaven and a material hell, and threatens the unbeliever with the horrors of brimstone. The hell of Mr. Spurgeon or General Booth is too gross and vulgar for certain refined circles of Christians, who have tried to dissolve the barbarity of physical torture into mental anguish and despair. The exchange is a doubtful good; for the endless agony of an unhappy mind would be as cruel an infliction as incessant suffering of the body. Hence it is that humane theologians have invented "conditional immortality," which endows the righteous with eternal life, and submits the wicked to a merciful process of extinction. Another suggestion (for it rests on no proof), which was hotly debated in the Andover controversy in America, is to the effect that all persons who die without an adequate notion of the Gospel will have it preached to them after death. In that case, the inscription over the infernal gate, "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here," may be erased in favour of the motto, "It is never too late to mend."

Assuming for the moment that evidence for the immortality of the soul is overwhelming, what evidence is there of a real heaven above the clouds, or of a hell below? Where is heaven located? This earth is an oblate spheroid in shape, and, in addition to revolving on its own axis, it also revolves at tremendous speed round the sun. Towards which point of the compass, then, shall we look for heaven? In any given direction we behold nothing but suns and stars, and many of these latter are millions of miles away from this earth. It has been calculated that the nearest fixed star is twenty millions of millions of miles away from our planet. Astronomers have swept the heavens with their telescopes, and have failed to find the place which the Christians delight to describe as the celestial home of all believers. The "mansions in the sky" appear as mythical as "castles in the air."

The Christians themselves can tell us nothing definite about the New Jerusalem. They can neither fix its position on the map of the skies, nor inform us what its climate, or what language the "angels" speak. All they know about it is summed up in the declaration that it is somewhere up "above the clouds;" that it is a monarchical country, and God is self-appointed king. The Christian poet dreams that—

"There is a happy land, far, far away,
Where saints in glory stand, bright, bright as day.
Oh how they sweetly sing, glory to their heavenly king;
Loud let his praises ring, praise, praise for aye."

And the Christian public, without a tittle of evidence concerning its reality, believes it. The fact is, it is a pleasant belief; and a pleasant fiction is more palatable to a low order of mind than stern reality. For my part, I do not deny the Christian heaven; I merely say that I am without evidence of its existence. But I do say that, if there be a heaven above the clouds, and all men possess immortal souls, then, in my judgment, the persons who will most deserve to live on through eternity in perpetual happiness will be those who have done the best service for mankind. With Edward Clodd,* I maintain: "There is but one life, if life it may be called, which seems to me to be God-forsaken; it is the life that is idle and selfish. Those few words express more than one might think; but their meaning has been set to sweeter music than I can command by Leigh Hunt, in the story of Abou Ben Adhem:—

"Abou Ben Adhem (may his tribe increase)
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,
And saw within the moonlight in his room,
Making it rich and like a lily in bloom,
An angel writing in a book of gold;

* "The Childhood of Religions," p. 153.

Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,
 And to the vision in the room he said,
 'What writest thou?' The vision raised its head,
 And, with a look made of all sweet accord,
 Replied, 'The names of those who love the Lord.'
 'And is mine one?' said Abou. 'Nay, not so,'
 Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,
 But cheerily still, and said, 'I pray thee, then,
 Write me as one that loves his fellow men.'

"The angel wrote and vanished. The next night
 He came again with a great wakening light,
 And showed the names whom love of God had blest,
 And, lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest."

CHAPTER XV.

CONCLUSION.

I HAVE now come to the end of my task. My endeavour has been to point out how all things in the world—indeed, how all things in the universe, to which we can set no limit—are constantly undergoing change, in the mental world as well as the physical. I have further sought to demonstrate that the ideas of the Bible writers are only incomplete intellectual phases, exemplifying the great law of evolution. I have shown that the Bible writers were ignorant upon many matters upon which we have now something approaching definite knowledge; that the Bible cosmogony, its geology, and biology are quite valueless in view of our modern knowledge on these subjects; that an impartial investigation of geology and palæontology reveal to us unmistakable evidence of the vast age of the earth and the great antiquity of the human race—an antiquity beside which the few thousand years claimed by the Bible writers sink into utter insignificance. I have carried my investigations further, and unveiled the mystery of the Bible myths, and impeached the supposed historical value of the sacred book. I have shown that the Bible in some parts teaches a very low form of morality, but that its ethical principles manifest improvement in the later books of the Old Testament, and reach their highest degree of development in the best portions of the New Testament. I have further attempted to show that moral principles have undergone many changes for the better since the days of the Carpenter of Nazareth.

Bible miracles I have demonstrated to be of no more value than Pagan ones; and I have sought to show that belief in miracles in past ages resulted from the ignorance and credulity of the masses who believed in them, and that, as the people become more intelligent and their knowledge increases, their belief in supernatural interference with the laws of nature gradually diminishes to the vanishing point. Bible poetry and Bible art I have shown to be inferior to the highest poetry and art from profane sources. I have then endeavoured to describe the evolution of the God idea and the various transitions of belief in regard to the problem of the soul and a future state. These subjects I have touched upon with a free hand, always calling to my assistance the views of writers whom I regard as authorities upon such matters. My aim has been to present matter for reflection, and to point out the drift of modern thought.

Some of my opinions may be incorrect. I do not claim infallibility. I am open to criticism and correction. I merely give my opinions for what they are worth, with the one single desire of promoting thought on problems of absorbing interest, upon a rational solution of which depend the happiness and progress of mankind.

THE END.

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